





THROUGH A DARTMOOR WINDOW

By BEATRICE CHASE

"A beautiful and human book."—**The Wheatsheaf.**

"The poetry of the great moor is steeped into her soul."—**Christian World.**

"The volume breathes of the moor and one can almost feel the cool wind as one reads it."—**Daily Graphic.**

"An artistic triumph. . . . From page to page the book breathes the air of the uplands."—**Irish Independent.**

"How real they all are! How absolutely different from the papier mâché peasantry of the town-dwelling novelist."—**Western Daily Mercury.**

"She has caught admirably well the romantic aspects of the scenery and associations of that wild strip of country in Devon."—**The Standard.**

"Reading it over tea, I wondered discontentedly at the absence of Devonshire cream. This will show you what atmosphere can do."—**Punch.**

"The lure of the moor, the cry of the Dart, the great virgin stretches of land with their scent of furze and bracken get into one's very blood."

Pall Mall Gazette.

"This is a singularly charming book. . . . It tells of the simplest persons and things. . . . But the seer of them is a gentlewoman of exquisite sensibility and gentleness, and her vision certainly has a rare translucency and radiance."

The Queen.

"It is thoroughly characteristic of this humane, tender, and wide-winged outlook from a Dartmoor window that Love, human, natural and divine, should be its presiding genius, carrying its final message to every strange adventurer among the tors."—**Daily Telegraph.**

"She acts as a wholesome corrective to the works of a certain novelist who leaves on us the impression that most of the moor folk are vicious or rascally. Living in their midst instead of at a seaside town, she possibly knows them almost as well as he does, and her evidence is that they are just as fine, honest people as in the Delectable Duchy next door."—**Evening Standard.**

"Hitherto one had somehow felt that to Richard Blackmore, above all others, belonged the supreme power of casting the moorland spell over his readers. But he depicted the romance of the earth life alone. . . . Beatrice Chase surrounds her pictures with the amethystine aura of the deepest mysteries of life and love, in their eternal kinship with a spiritual life whose beauty no pen can describe. In painting earth for us, she paints heaven."—**Occult Review.**

"There are few books since 'Lorna Doone' that convey so faithfully the air of the great stillness. . . . It places Miss Chase pre-eminently at the head of the moor writers."—**Baltimore Catholic Review.**

"In these days of battle, murder and sudden death, it is a privilege to wander with Miss Chase over the eternal peaceful moor or gaze with her out of the window that overlooks the high road to 'most anywhere,' . . . to sense life at its simplest and best and truest, and for a space to be at rest in a world torn, bleeding and appalled."—**Transcript, Boston.**

THE HEART OF THE MOOR

By BEATRICE CHASE

"No one who knows the Moor well from Ashburton to Bellever and from Bellever to Cranmere Pool can afford to leave these pages unread. . . . Miss Chase has stood on Dream Tor and looked into the very heart of the Moor, and something of the mystic joy of that vision has left an almost magical impression, rare and subtle, upon her work. . . . She has written a book as sweet and haunting as 'A Bachelor in Arcady.'"—**The Academy.**

"Miss Chase is moor mad. She loves the moor with a pantheistic ferocity. . . . She loves her Dartmoor folk too as she loves every moorland thing; she writes of them lovingly as a mother might record the doings of her children. . . . It is a book with something to interest you or amuse you or set you wondering on every page."—**Birmingham Daily Gazette.**

"With a heart full of love for their seeming oddities, she has written of their joys and griefs, their longings and disappointments, their little twisted comedies and the brooding shadows which hang over the wild wind-swept spaces. . . . It is an unusual story, nor undeserving of mention in the same breath as 'Lorna Doone.'"—**Manchester Courier.**

"No one who has read in these pages of 'The man with the iron mask' will ever forget either the author or the book. Miss Chase may be moor mad, genius may be akin to madness. There is, however, rare and high art in her insanity."—**Dublin Daily Express.**

"She is 'moor mad,' a nature lover to her finger-tips, and is able to overcome the constitutional shyness of the Dartmoor folk so that they regard her as one of themselves. Her book contains some of the most sympathetic descriptions of this west country beauty spot that we remember to have come across. These people, their stories and humours, their dogs and their babies, the work of the land and the writer's love for her home and its setting, form a book of singular power."—**The Clarion.**

"One of the best books dealing with the uplands of Devon that it has been our lot to read. From start to finish the volume breathes the air of Dartmoor, and on every page the reader comes across one or other of those folk so well known to frequenters of the moor. When the authoress breaks into dialect there is no doubt about its being the real thing. . . . It is a book of Dartmoor in every sense of the word."—**Devon and Exeter Gazette.**

"The book is a notable contribution to the literature of Dartmoor—convincing, vivid, and lovable. . . . Wind, sun, storm and shadow play on the moor in these delightful pages. . . . Light touches everywhere prove how deep and accurate is the author's knowledge."—**Pall Mall Gazette.**

"Verily she gets the very soul and inspiration of the whole moorland into her pages. . . . Other writers have given it merely as background to their human stories . . . but here Dartmoor itself is the centre of interest that makes the moor a haunting reality to the reader of this distinctive book."—**Cork Constitution.**

"Miss Chase has proved her temerity to be justifiable. She shows us Dartmoor from a new standpoint. . . . She makes her reader not only understand but share her love for the moor, and understand too why the inhabitants of tiny Graystone were all so fond of her."—**New York Times.**

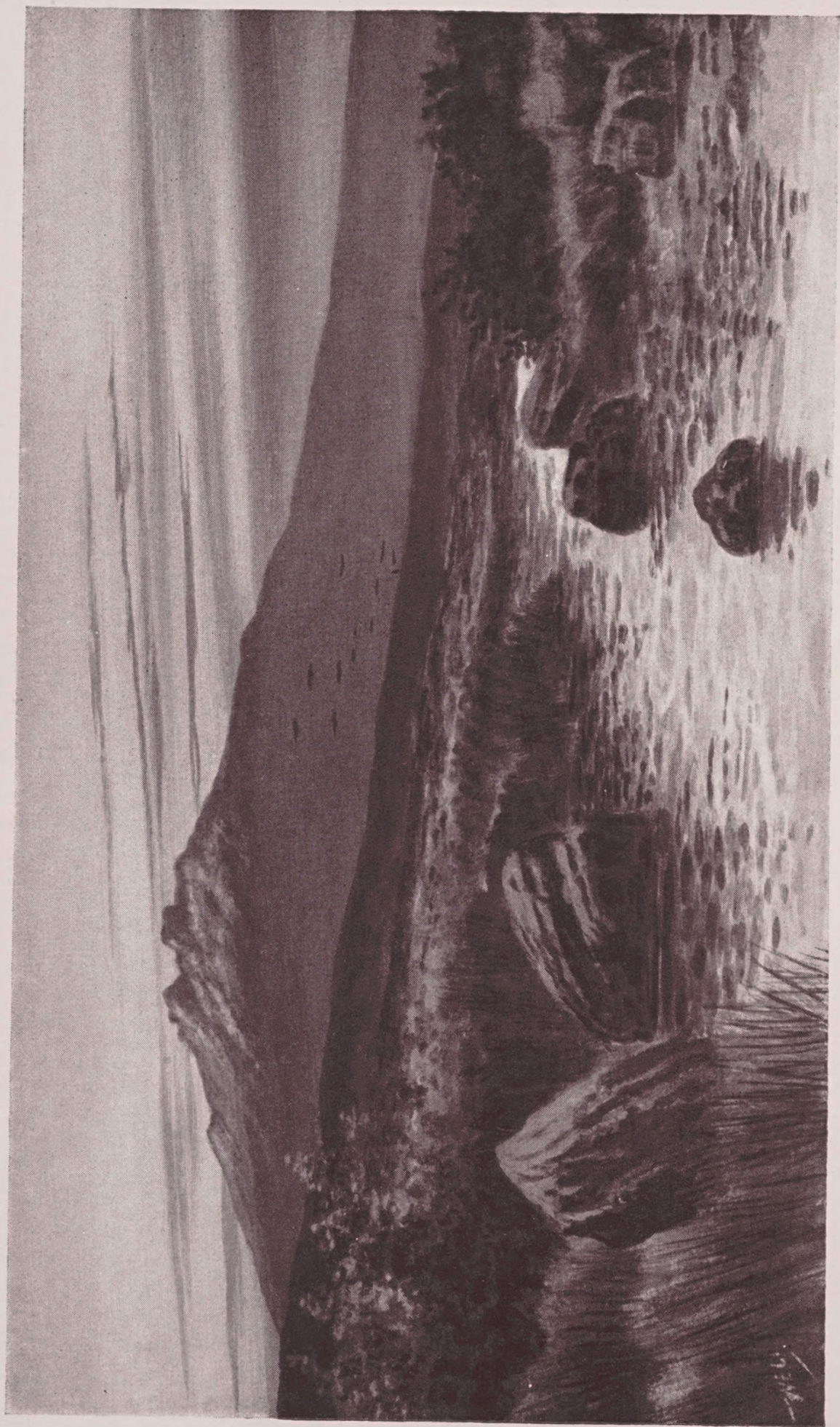
MY LADY OF THE MOOR

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GOD'S PRISONER
RISING FORTUNES
OUR LADY OF DELIVERANCE
A PRINCESS OF VASCOVY
JOHN OF GERISAU
UNDER THE IRON FLAIL
BONDMAN FREE
MR. JOSEPH SCORER
BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU
A WEAVER OF WEBS
HEARTS IN EXILE
THE GATE OF THE DESERT
WHITE FIRE
GIANT CIRCUMSTANCE
PROFIT AND LOSS
THE LONG ROAD
CARETTE OF SARK
PEARL OF PEARL ISLAND
THE SONG OF HYACINTH
MY LADY OF SHADOWS
GREAT-HEART GILLIAN
A MAID OF THE SILVER SEA
LAURISTONS
THE COIL OF CARNE
THEIR HIGH ADVENTURE
QUEEN OF THE GUARDED MOUNTS
MR. CHERRY
THE QUEST OF THE GOLDEN ROSE
MARY ALL-ALONE
RED WRATH
BEES IN AMBER (VERSE)
MAID OF THE MIST
BROKEN SHACKLES
"ALL'S WELL!" (VERSE)
FLOWER OF THE DUST

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

OF THE
UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA
FROM
THE
FIRST
SETTLEMENT
TO
THE
PRESENT
TIME
BY
JOHN
B. HENRY
NEW YORK
1850



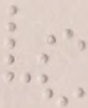
From a sketch by W. E. Laycock

BELLEVER

MY LADY OF THE MOOR

BY
JOHN OXENHAM

WITH FRONTISPIECE

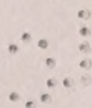


LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

1916

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M. V. G. pl. 14-16.

TO
BEATRICE
MY LADY OF THE MOOR
WHO
BY HER NOBLE FAITH AND MANY PRAYERS
SAVED ALIVE
THE SOUL OF ONE SINFUL MAN
AND
IF IT PLEASE GOD
OF TWO

NOTE

IN these days it is advisable to defend oneself beforehand against possible actions at law for the unintentional use of the names of persons of whom one has never heard. The only "adopted" names in this book are those of "Noel Daunt" and his pseudonym "Ian Carril." His own names could obviously not be given. In making use of these others I wish to state as plainly as print can put it, that, so far as I know, they belong to no one in actual life. If they do, it is pure coincidence and quite unintentional. As far as I am concerned, they are simply fanciful names. I know of no one bearing the same.

MY LADY OF THE MOOR

PROLOGUE

I.

JUST a year ago from this day I was savouring Dartmoor for the first time. And that is a great and boundless joy, and a white-stone time for any man. To me it was to prove even more than that, for it brought me a unique experience and a great white friendship.

I had made my headquarters at the little inn at Postbridge, the half-way house on the great up-along, down-along, high road between Moreton Hampstead and Princetown, and so in the very heart of things, and nearer than I knew to the very Heart of the Moor itself.

From there I rambled day after day, wide and free, over the mighty sweeps of rolling moorlands, knee-deep now in heather already swinging purple bells in places; and again, ploughing dubious courses through vast stretches of breast-high billowing bracken, and stumbling every once in a while on unexpected kistvaens, and miniature

Stonehenges, and pre-historic hut-circles. But always in the end I managed to win through to some bold Tor, soft-carpeted below with short green turf, and up aloft all a-bristle with the wild fantasies of rock flung up in the beginning of things by the vast internal fires, and scored and wrought and pitted—and soothed and salved as well with moss and lichen—through all the ages since by the gentle, ruthless fingers of Time.

And there I would lie for hours, nibbling the inn's forethoughtfully-provided lunches, smoking at intervals, watching the wonderful play of cloud and sun over the wide unsullied world below, and the doings of the only living things in sight—the cows, and sheep, and quaint little moor-ponies and their still quainter kittenish foals; and thinking the deep, deep thoughts that well up out of the void to fill the gracious spaces of life.

It was a rarely uplifting time, and I came to be on terms of delightful intimacy with all the heights within easy reach;—with Sittaford Tor and its stark Grey Wethers, with Stannon and Rough Tors, with Longaford and the twisted dwarfs of Wistman's Wood, with Laughter Tor and Huccaby, with Riddon Ridge and Blackaton and Hamildown.

But, chiefest and best, with Bellever. For Bellever is very close to the heart of things, and from it—no, from him, for the Tors, and Bellever supremely so, have an individuality of their own

which, to all who love them, entirely precludes all thought of the impersonal— . . .

Indeed, to Bellever I am inclined to go a step higher still and accord her queenship and call her 'her.' For Bellever, though not by any means the highest or boldest of the Tors, still rises like a queen among them all, and from her throne of mighty rough-piled granite shelves you see all the rest and very much more besides.

I wandered east-by-north to Grimspound and Shapley and King Tor, and east-by-south to Yar Tor and Dartmeet. Then, one noble day of shine and shade, with occasional sweeps of rain which quickened into new and vivid beauty the olives and emeralds and purples of the Moor, sprinkling all the face of it with shimmer of living diamonds, overlaying even the gray old stones with gleaming cloth of gold when the sun shone out again, and filling the further distances with tones of tender amethyst and opal which ministered to one's soul like the silent sympathy of friends in time of trouble, I came upon Graystone.

I had come wandering over the great green shoulder of Hamildown when, away below in front, I saw the tall gray church spire soaring, shapely and beautiful, above the cushiony green foliage and clustering roofs of the village. And I sat down on the nearest half-dried rock and gazed at it all with mightiest enjoyment.

For never is oasis so welcome as after long journeying through desert sand ; and never is the sight of tillage and boschage, and the curling blue smoke of homely chimneys, so sweet as when one comes upon them unexpectedly amid the great rolling shoulders and rounded breasts and hollows of the Moor.

I sat so long in the joy of that first sight of Graystone that my shadow was long in front of me when at last I rose to go. I had wandered wide that day. It would be a long and tiring walk back to Postbridge, and, to one still new to the Moor, none too attractive in the coming darkness.

I halted for a second between the alternatives—on to the allure of the village ?—or try back ?

And then, to my vast enrichment and perpetual joy, though at the time I did not know it, my good angel surely whispered “ On !—on !—on ! ” and I strode down the hill, so unaware of what awaited me down there that my only thought was as to how to prevent my good hosts at Postbridge sending out search-parties for the recovery of the wanderer.

The no less kindly folk of the little inn soon set my mind at rest. I could send a telegram from the post-office round the corner. They could provide me with a room and all necessaries for the night. Tea could be ready in five minutes, and dinner at any hour I chose to name.

As it was late for tea and early enough for dinner

after only a stroller's lunch, I decided on a tea-dinner in half an hour. And when I had dispatched it I strolled out into the gloaming to savour Graystone and its surroundings ; and all unconsciously, and thereby all the more enjoyably, wandered straight into the outer fringe of this story.

For had my good angel faltered or for once made a mistake,—which good angels I suppose cannot do,—I should have had nothing whatever to do with this matter save as an outsider, and thereby would have missed much—more perhaps than I yet fully realise.

That busy good angel of mine was hard at work again. I wandered down-hill past the old gray church, along a typical Devonshire lane banked high with flowers and ferns and hazel bushes, and across a small stone bridge below which flowed a swift moorland stream with long green streamers underneath its glimmering brown face. On past another little inn, and presently I came upon a cluster of buildings which gleamed white in the lingering afterglow of the long-set sun.

I stood looking at the deliciously artistic waves of thick gray-brown thatch above the windows, and, with no further intention than a closer view of the tempting picture, moved unconsciously towards the little wicket-gate which led to the porch.

Inside the garden wall, on my right as I drew to the gate, stood another little white, thatched

building almost smothered in red climbing roses. Its door stood invitingly open as though welcoming entrance, and in the soft sweet *crépuscule* within I caught the ruby glow of a tiny swinging lamp. And as I stood puzzling as to what this might be, and searching for an explanation, my eye lighted on a sturdy little granite cross rising out of the rich red rose-clusters above the doorway.

A chapel then !—a little holy place, nestling like a veritable angels' nest among the hills in this quiet corner of the Moor.

I doffed my hat, unlatched the wicket, which gave a subdued click in spite of all my care, and, stepping softly, entered.

And found I was not alone ;—humanly, I mean. For none, I think, could enter that little sanctuary and doubt that here was indeed an abode of peace, a veritable House of God.

It was all pure white save the altar's simple panel-beadings of gold, and the altar-curtains embroidered with golden olive leaves, and the candlesticks, and the vases filled with golden broom, and the crucified Christ over the altar, with figures of saints on out-jutting granite pedestals on either side up above. The seats were of dark red wood and the rafters of the roof were black. Everything else—save the tiny red lamp, a large missal, a prayer book or two, and a rosary of ruby beads hanging over the front seat—was purest white, and a sense of soothing and

perfect peace enveloped me as I tiptoed in and sank into the furthest corner of the back seat.

Whether I was intruding or not I did not know. Still, I had found the door open to its widest, and it is never an intrusion to enter the House of God.

I judged it to be a House of Prayer consecrated to the worship of the Roman faith, though indeed at times it is not easy nowadays to distinguish between the houses of the older faith and those of the more advanced forms of the newer.

But that did not trouble me. I can kneel and worship in Notre-Dame or St. Peter's as helpfully as in a Primitive Methodist chapel,—and more so at times.

The other worshipper, kneeling in the front seat absorbed in her devotions, had given no slightest sign of recognition of my presence. All I could see in the dim light was that she was slender and graceful, and wore her hair in heavy coils which gleamed like ripening corn even in the faint light of the swinging ruby lamp.

Her head was bowed in deepest devotion when I entered, and she so remained, obviously absorbed in her prayers, for so long that I half wondered if she might not indeed be but one more beautiful adornment of the little shrine. I watched her hypnotically,—no merely human man could have done otherwise,—and condoned my rudeness with the comfortable knowledge that she could not possibly be aware of it.

My own prayers? They were said even as I watched. There was a strange, deep, comforting, and all-pervasive sense of prayer all about me as I knelt, as though that little holy place were indeed so habituated to unusual fervency of petition, and to closest intimacy with heavenly things, that its very atmosphere was charged therewith.

Presently, to the vast relief of my somewhat quickened feelings, my fellow-worshipper rose silently from her knees and sank into her seat. She took up a book from a pile at her side, with a subtle grace in the simple action which I felt but could not explain, and leaned restfully back as though reading in it,—at peace with herself, and life, and all the world. The ruby lamp above her head, however, gave so dim a light that I imagined she held the book more from habit than of necessity, and that its contents were probably very familiar to her.

So we sat for a space, in a stillness so perfect that in it alone there was again a most uplifting sense of worship. And then, with no more than a rustle, she was gone, and the little white place felt suddenly empty and bereft.

Outside, far away on the edge of the Moor, a lamb woke up and bleated anxiously to its mother. It seemed but to accentuate the perfect silence which enveloped me.

The dim red light shone faintly on a figure of the

Good Shepherd above the crucified Christ. In His arms was a lamb—a white one, and at His feet, controlled thereto by the butt of His crook, was another of darker hue and evidently of less amenable disposition. Still they were both there; and, incongruously, I wondered if the artist had meant to typify in them woman's attitude towards religion and man's.

For simple decency's sake I sat on for a minute or two, gazing at the Shepherd and the sheep, and then I also went out into the night which seemed full of the fragrance of happy growing things; and I came out into a shaft of mellow light which streamed out of the door of the house but a few feet away. And, full in the stream of it, stood the lady of the chapel.

She was standing with her back to the light, so that I could not distinguish her face very well. She gave me, however, an exquisite impression of grace and something more—some indefinable and uplifting charm as though here was something unusually sweet and pure and altogether good and lovely.

I could not pass without speaking, so I fell back on obviously unnecessary apology.

"I hope I did not intrude, in entering your little Holy of Holies," I ventured.

"Indeed, no! No one intrudes in entering God's House,"—and the rounded tones fulfilled all my

thought of her, even as her words confirmed my own view of the matter.

“It is an exquisite little place. . . . One comes on it like a jewel in the midst of your wild moors.”

“Yes,” she nodded. . . . “Are you by chance of our faith ? ”

“No. I belong to one of the newer branches of the later church.”

“Yet you knelt in there,” she said quickly. “—And prayed ? ” and I felt the compelling power of her gaze, though I could not in the dusk see her eyes very clearly.

“Both knelt and prayed. Why not ? Did you put up a prayer for me along with your own ? ”

“Why do you ask that ? ”—again in quick imperious fashion.

“I don’t know. . . . I thought it not impossible. . . . I think it was your fervency.”

“Well—I did. I make it a practice to pray for everyone who comes in, whether I know them or not.”

“I thank you. It is the same God we worship, however much our methods of approach may vary.”

“Many feel that who go into my little chapel. . . . You are staying in Graystone ? ”

“I am stopping at Postbridge, but I wandered all day on the Moors and only lighted on Graystone as

I came over Hamildown, and as it was late, and I am not a Moorman, I thought it best to stop overnight. I am very glad I did,—or I might have missed the sight of your little House of Prayer. Do you celebrate Mass here ? ”

“ On occasion. We cannot support a regular priest or chaplain, so the celebration is only at the intervals demanded by the rubrics.”

“ I would like to come again before I leave—if I may without intruding.”

“ I have told you—there can be no intrusion,”—and she moved towards the chapel door, to close it for the night, I presumed.

“ I thank you. Then I shall come once more,” and as I lifted my hat and turned to go she passed into the little chapel, and I saw her casting a last loving look all round as though loth to leave it even now.

I was outside the gate when I heard her call to me.

“ Sir !—Your parcel ! ” and she came out carrying in her hand a flat square paper parcel.

I stood and looked at her and it.

“ You left it in the corner of the seat where you were sitting,” and she held it out to me.

“ But it is not mine. I brought nothing with me.”

“ Not ? Then whose, I wonder ? And what can it be ? ”

She had come to the other side of the wicket-gate,

still holding out the parcel as though desirous of getting rid of it—and possibly of me.

I took it out of her hand to examine it.

“It feels to me uncommonly like manuscript,” I said, as I handled it tentatively.

“Ah?—you know the feel of manuscript?” she asked, with quick interest.

“Well, I should do, seeing that my life is spent in spoiling paper—or otherwise,” I laughed.

“Otherwise, I hope. What is your name, sir?”—and the crisp ‘sir’ which she occasionally interpolated in her talk had already won my great enjoyment.

I told her, and she reached out a cordial hand.

“I am so glad,” she said simply, but with delightful heartiness. “I have read many of your books and enjoyed most of them.”

“That is good to hear. But I wish you had enjoyed them all.”

“It is natural to have one’s preferences. I have even among my own books.”

“You write too? Oh, this is good!”

“I will close my chapel and then you will perhaps come in for a few minutes. It is always delightful to have a word with the outer world——”

“Oh, don’t call me that, I beg of you,” I laughed.

“—Even though you thank God every day that you don’t belong to it,” she ended her sentence; and in answer to mine,—“You represent it for the

moment, anyway. Excuse me, one moment. I must light my lamp," and she disappeared into the house, and returned instantly with another tiny ruby lamp in which floated a fresh unlighted wick.

She passed into the chapel and I watched with interest from the door, while, with a match lighted at the suspended lamp, she lit the new lamp she carried and substituted it for the one whose service was expiring.

She did it all with a deft grace infused with most obvious lovingkindliness for the proceeding, and as she came out carrying the flickering lamp I asked :

"Is it essential to light the new lamp from the old one ? "

"Why, of course. In that way, you see, the light is never extinguished. It typifies the love of God which never dies."

"That is rather a fine idea."

"No rather about it. It is *the* idea,—the only possible idea. I am the Lady of the Lamp here. The light is in my charge as it was in that of the Vestals of old."

She locked the door of the little white chapel, and with a quietly imperative "Please come in !" led the way into the house,—through a long passage lined with paintings in water-colour, and glass-fronted cabinets filled with china and curios, to a

room at the back, though I discovered later that it was really the front of the house.

A charming room,—with a huge wavering oak beam lengthwise in the ceiling, and a fire-place that occupied almost half the side-wall,—a real Dartmoor fire-place, with an immense low iron cobbett inside, on which were smouldering peats that filled the air with delicate pungent fragrance.

The smell of burning peat always has an immense appeal for me. It is the homeliest and homeiest of things that burn. It always conjures up for me visions of warm farm-kitchens, and joyous simple faring, and tired sheep-dogs spelled out on the floor, and pensive cats performing their toilets before retiring—or otherwise—for the night.

And here sure enough was the sheep-dog basking in the gentle heat, but she got up at once and came along to investigate me, and to make quite sure that all was right and this intrusion into the home-sanctuary permissible. I gave her a hand to sniff, while the lady of the chapel watched interestedly. The dog smelt searchingly and her white-tipped tail began to testify acceptance of the proffered friendship.

“That’s all right. You are a friend. She never makes a mistake. I am glad,”—and she picked up a small striped cat, properly busy at his toilet, and sank into a chair with him in her lap, where he continued his operations unabashed and as if nothing had happened and time was short.

“ Please smoke, if you wish,” was my lady’s next command.

“ You are sure it will not be offensive ? ”

“ I like the smell. Now tell me all about yourself. Why did you come to Dartmoor, and what have you been doing ? ”—and we sat long and talked.

It was only when I rose at last, and regretfully, to go that we bethought us of the parcel, which she had laid on the far end of the table when we came in.

“ And this ? ” I said, picking it up again.

And then my eye caught a superscription on it, and holding it to the light I read, “ TO MY LADY OF THE MOOR.”

She started and held out a quick hand for it.

“ Ah !—then !—yes, perhaps I know what it may be,” she said, and took it out of my hand, and holding it in hers looked down at it with a strange perplexity in her face.

It was a fine high face, naturally reposeful, but given to quick and vivid expression of her words and thoughts. And there was more in it than one can well put into words ;—a sense of elation and elevation above the superficialities of life,—and of high control, as though she had known sorrows more than most, but had learned to build of them golden steps to higher things. And, withal, there was, behind and below all else, a look of deep quiet joyousness and high content with what she had arrived at, which was good and uplifting to contemplate in her.

■ If at one time sorrow had swept her with its cleansing fires it had left nothing but pure gold behind it. The final delicate touches to a beautiful face are wrought with the Master-Sculptor's finest, sharpest tools. And here, unless my sense misled me, was an underlook of peace after storm,—of that steadfast peace, rooted and stablished in the Higher Things, which nothing now could destroy, nor even greatly disturb.

Somewhat disturbed it was, however, as she stood holding the parcel and looking down at it.

“ Did you see anything of a man who was at Postbridge yesterday—at your inn probably—a lean, dark, sombre, rather sad-faced man ? ” she asked quietly, and looked right through me with a pair of most compelling blue-gray eyes.

“ There was such a man as you describe. He had stopped there once before, I believe, in the rooms I'm occupying. They told me he was a writer also. Is this his ? ”

“ I think so. I shall know when . . . ” and she looked meaningly down at the parcel.

“ I think I caught a glimpse of him this morning also, just as I was starting out.”

“ Quite likely. He must have walked over and left this while I was out, where he knew I could not fail to find it.”

“ And he did not see you, nor you him ? ”

“ No. I have been out all day—up on the

heights," she said, with a rarely sweet smile, evoked evidently by some inner enjoyment of her own. "How long did you think of stopping in Graystone?"

"I was going to walk back to-morrow, lest the Postbridge folks should begin to think I've bolted without paying my bill."

"They won't think that. We don't think that way on Dartmoor. . . . Would it be possible for you to wait one more day?"

"Oh, quite. I shall be delighted if I can be of any service to you."

"If this is what I imagine it may be," she said thoughtfully, "I might be glad of your advice. . . ."

"It will be entirely at your service, and it will be a pleasure to me to wait."

"Thank you! . . . If you would come up to-morrow evening. . . . My days are very full as a rule, but I will make time somehow to go into this."

"If it will help I'll gladly wait longer. I'm sure there's plenty to see about Graystone."

"Plenty to see," she smiled, but I could see that her thoughts were on the parcel, and I took my leave, and went slowly back along the silent shadowy lanes, past the other little inn all dark and apparently asleep, across the bridge over the stream whose bubbling laughter was much more audible than before, under the big trees by the church, and so to my own hostelry and bed.

And I lay long awake, thinking of the fair châtelaine of the old thatched mansion as she knelt before me in her little white chapel, and of the sombre-faced man I had seen at Postbridge ; and wondering not a little what was in that parcel, and what possible use my advice could be in the matter.

But I was none the less well content that it had been—or might be—asked.

II.

I was out before breakfast next morning and instinctively wandered along the lane I had travelled the previous night, and so came presently to the little white chapel again.

The door was at its widest, and when I peeped cautiously in over the wall, I saw a coil of shining gold plaits bobbing up and down, and its owner, on her knees, carefully sweeping out her tiny sanctuary with brush and dust-pan.

It was an entrancing sight. I had strolled up so quietly that she had not heard me. The side of her face, which was all I could see, showed intensest absorption in her task and uttermost devotion to see that all was done with most complete perfection. I have seen just that same look on a young mother's face as she bathed and powder-puffed her first baby.

Then she caught sight of me and rose to her feet with welcoming face. She was wearing a long all-enveloping, holland pinafore with red Norwegian embroidery on it, and it became her exceedingly well.

She bowed with a slight smile as I lifted the latch of the wicket and entered, after kicking any possibility of dust off my boots and devoutly hoping I should not mar her work. Her manner, however, showed me that her chapel was to her a Holy of Holies, for worship only, not for casual talk, and as I passed in she quietly slipped out and disappeared into the house.

She was back in a moment or two without the pinafore, and kneeling at her prayers in what was evidently her accustomed place, and I knelt also and said my own, and then sat quietly watching her in the reposeful charm of her surroundings.

Her devout absorption and obvious aloofness from mundane matters were to me a very beautiful lesson in religious observance and reverent worship.

For a full hour we remained so, in a white, unbroken, perfection of silence which had in it an uplift and healing past the telling. The service of the Roman Church had never held for me more than a certain æsthetic attraction, but here was a simplicity and quiet intensity of adoration which I had never at any time seen the like of, and which could not possibly have been surpassed.

I thought many thoughts in that white silent hour, and my most wandering ones strayed no further afield than the Gentle Shepherd with the white lamb and the black one above the crucifix ; with the Holy Mother and Child, the Child holding a monstrance, on an outjutting granite bracket on His right hand,—a group whose exact likeness I had never met with before ;—and on His left, S. Michael, with lifted hand and drawn sword trampling on a vanquished dragon of unusually truculent aspect. Him I recognised from his prototype of The Guarded Mount in the Bay of Treacherous Tides on the Norman coast.

At the end of the hour the lady of the chapel rose silently and passed out, and I followed.

“ I knew you would come,” she said, with a smile. “ Everyone comes again.”

“ I am not surprised. It is a House of Peace and it draws one. . . . It is very dear to you.”

“ Very dear. You see, it is all my very own and I am its properly appointed keeper. No hand but mine tends it.”

“ Are there many of your faith round about here ? ”

“ Almost none. But we have many visitors, and some—like yourself—are broad-minded enough to find benefit by kneeling in my little white house, even though they are not of the faith. I am always glad when strangers come—and come again.”

“ And the manuscript ? ”

“ I have only had time to glance at it. . . . It is what I . . . what I thought it might be, and I shall be very grateful for your advice in the matter. By the evening I shall be ready to talk to you about it. Get the people at the inn to put you up some lunch, and go along to Hound Tor, and if you feel like it, up Hey Tor also. They are both well worth while.”

Which, accordingly, I did, but got no further than the first. For the huge, bristling, gray-black Hounds of the Tor amply satisfied me, and I lay all day among them, delighting in the immensity and weirdness of their fantasies, and thinking much of the little white chapel and its fair ministrant, of the lean dark man whose rooms I was occupying at Postbridge, and of the manuscript he had delivered to her in so strange a fashion.

It was a heavenly day of clear vivifying sunshine, which set the gray Hounds panting in the heat, and the lower lands reeling and quivering like drunken things. And it was good simply to lie there looking out over the widespread earth, watching the slow majestic progression of the high-piled banks of snowy cloud as they drifted across the indigo-blue sky, and drinking in all the mingled fragrances of the Moor distilled by the noonday sun.

But the gloaming—dimpsey, they call it on Dartmoor, I am told—found me back in my corner-seat

in the little white chapel, and, as before, my lady presently came in, without a glance in my direction, and knelt in her accustomed place.

At the end of an hour she rose and passed out, and I followed.

With a slight movement of the head she invited me into the house, and we passed into the room with the wavering length-beam in the roof and the burning peats on the great iron cobbett.

She enquired interestedly as to how I had spent the day, and then, picking up the parcel of manuscript from the table, handed it to me, saying : “ Will you please take it back with you to Post-bridge, read it very carefully, and when you have thought it over come again and tell me if you think it should be published.”

All of which I duly did, thanking my good angel for urging me on that first day, and so leading me to actual personal acquaintance with “ My Lady of the Moor.”

And the experience of reading that manuscript, in the very rooms where it was pondered over, and to some extent written, was a curious one. It brought the writer, whom I had only seen twice, and only for a moment or two each time, very vividly before me. So very vividly, indeed, that at times he seemed to be actually present in the room with me. More than once I could have sworn I saw his lean dark face and sombre figure in the passages, among

the other shadows cast by my candle as I went up to bed. And the sensation of his presence was never absent from me.

I was glad, while reading what he had written, that I had myself come to know the Lady of the Moor, for even the little I had seen of her enabled me to enter with vital sympathy into all his feelings concerning her.

In his story he calls her simply "My Lady,"—"My Lady of the Moor,"—or "Beatrice," and though I have since come to know more about her, and she has been graciously pleased to accord me somewhat of her confidence in this matter, I think it well to leave it at that, and "Beatrice" and "My Lady" she remains, so far as this book is concerned.

I saw her again three days later,—starting early from Postbridge, and making a long day of it.

She was sitting in a low chair in a flowery nook close by the little white chapel, busily darning stockings. She gave me cordial greeting and went steadily on with her work while we talked.

"Well?" she asked.

"Well, I have read it all most carefully. And now it rests with you. I consider it well worth publishing. But——"

"You are thinking about me in the matter?"

"Naturally. . . . I can see benefit to many in the story, but—once more . . ."

“ You mean the personal bits—about myself—and . . . ”

“ Exactly. It is nothing if not personal. The actuality and humanity of it all make it what it is.”

“ I should never consider myself in such a case. I never have. What does oneself matter if one can perhaps accomplish some little good in the world ? ”

“ And . . . the other ? ”

“ He will make no objection. I will answer for him. That amazes you ? ”

“ It does—in the light of all this,”—I indicated the manuscript.

“ Ah,—that shows only the one side of him. The other side, which is fully known perhaps to none but myself, is something quite different. By nature he is a great man . . . a very great man, and yet the evil weeds have grown up in him alongside the fair white lilies, and at times have overgrown them. It is amazing, I know. It is hard to understand,—indeed, one cannot understand. But these things are, and God understands, I am sure, and His pity and forgiveness are infinite. . . . You need have no fear of the other man objecting. Indeed, once—long ago—he asked me to write his story if I thought it could be of service to the world. But that, of course, was not possible for me. It was for some man to do, and it is to me an amazing thing that that man should, of all men, be Noel

Daunt. And yet,—it is fitting. Perhaps no other could have done it so well. May I count on your assistance in the matter then ? ”

“ To the fullest extent of my powers.”

“ I thank you, sir. Then we will have it published. You see what he says at the beginning ? ”
—I nodded.—“ He may never see it, but he will know that it has been done and I think he will be glad. . . . And I shall be glad to have given him that additional joy.”

Now that was how I came to make the personal acquaintance of “ My Lady of the Moor,”—an acquaintance which has ripened into a warm—and for me a most uplifting—friendship.

And this that follows is the manuscript left by Noel Daunt in the little white chapel at Heysham House.

Throughout, you will see, as I have said, that he has no name for the Lady of the Moor but “ My Lady,” or now and again—“ Beatrice,” and that is of right her name and surely of prophetic foreknowledge in its conference. For ‘ Conferrer of Blessings ’ in supremest measure she undoubtedly was to him, as indeed she is to all with whom she comes in contact.

And once, when discussing his manuscript with her, and I remarked upon this point—that it was not unusual for the characters in a story to bear surnames also, she turned the battery of her blue-gray

eyes upon me, and with a whimsical dance in them, said: "Surnames always strike me as a trifle vulgar, you know. Royalties never use them, so why should I? Am I not Queen of the Moor?"

So Beatrice, by her own edict, she remains, and that is all-sufficient.

In the same way, the other principal character is referred to in Daunt's manuscript only as "That other" or "Lancelot." This was at once My Lady's name for, and description of, him.

"I believed him Galahad and he proved but Lancelot," she once explained to Daunt.

Daunt himself knew him by no other name, till near the end. And for myself, it is only within the last month that I have learned his rightful name and standing—to my very great astonishment.

Furthermore—certain omissions respecting My Lady's home-life and surroundings may possibly strike an unusually keen and observant reader.

As to that point, all I can say is that, when the manuscript was handed to me, wherever Daunt had allowed himself to trespass on such personal matters—and I can well understand his enjoyment in filling in to the best of his powers his careful picture of My Lady and her background,—all such references were ruthlessly stricken out by My Lady's own vigorous copying-ink pencil.

And when I ventured to suggest that they would

add charm to the story, and that their deletion left gaps, she said, in that conclusive way of hers which carried with it a suggestion of rudeness in further argument,—“No matter. All is told that need be told. My private life concerns nobody but myself. If it leaves me somewhat nebulous—so much the better.”

JOHN OXENHAM

1.

(From the manuscript of Noel Daunt. This was on two loose pages towards the end of the MS. It was obviously written later on, but it seems well to place it here.)

I HAVE written out these notes solely for you, my dear Lady of the Moor, so that you may have a still clearer understanding of my life than ever you have had up to now.

No one has ever come to so close an understanding of it all as yourself. No one but yourself, indeed, has ever cared to understand it. But, as you will see, there were things in it which, for your own peace of mind, I judged it wiser to keep still buried in the past.

The necessity for that is now happily ended, and if you ever read this—as I hope may come to pass—you will, I know, give me no blame for withholding from you that which I did.

I am writing also because it is an unspeakable joy to me to live over again these later days, even on paper, and thereby to give some kind of utterance to my feelings about your dear self and all you have

done for me. God alone knows how great a thing that is. May He reward you !

It is all very inadequate, I know, for there are feelings deeper than all the words in the world can express. And such are mine with regard to this whole matter.

But—well, you will understand, as you have so wonderfully understood all along.

By the time your eyes light on these words I shall be on my way to join the new army they are forming,—not in my own name, of course, but in that by which you have known me best. If I get out to the Front, as I hope to do, I do not think it likely I shall ever return. Indeed, I fervently hope and pray that this poor life, which by me was dedicated to such unworthy ends, and by you redeemed therefrom, may be serviceably given in a cause which I believe to be absolutely just and right.

We are in for a bitter life-struggle. Every man we can muster will be needed. I can see that. And—remembering the death of shame that might have been mine, my highest hope is to give my life worthily for my country.

If that happily comes to pass, you will know that I went just as you would have me go,—doing my duty at last and to the last, and blessing your name with my latest breath.

My good friend and solicitor, Henry Denver, will notify you of my death, and you will put up a

prayer for me now and again in your little white chapel on the Moor.

Everything of which I am possessed I leave to you and beg your acceptance of. No one could put it to better service than yourself. It is all in Denver's good hands, and he will relieve you of all trouble in the matter.

I shall know all about your happiness. You saved my soul alive and so have made that possible to me. And I shall rejoice mightily with you.

If it is permitted to me, I hope to be nearer to you after my death than was ever possible to me in this life. And I have hope, which at times amounts to assurance, that that may be so.

May God give you every good !

2.

WHETHER this record of the strange and wonderful things that have befallen me on this once only-to-be-cursed,—but now ever-to-be-blessed,—Dartmoor will ever see the light, will depend upon the pleasure and wisdom of one in whom I have most perfect confidence, and whom I hold in admiration and affection beyond my power to express.

For my untellable joy in the re-living of these later days, I have set it all down as simply and clearly and truthfully as it has been permitted me to do,—and also in the sure hope and belief that—if it should be given to the world—it may in some small way minister to the cheer and consolation of other sorely-wounded souls,—broken like myself, not on the field of honour, but in the grinding mills of God for our downcasting and uplifting.

For, different as we all are in outward appearance, the very man within us derives after all from one common stock, and so is subject to all its elemental faculties—for good or for ill. The hopes, desires, and passions, which go to the making of men, are shared in varying degree by all alike,—rampant in

some, latent in others, and by some held sternly under control. To these last alone is happiness possible.

It is the very simple story of a soul in bondage (see Note 1 below) and of a white saint who loosed his (their) chains and lifted him (them) out of prison by the pure might of her own supreme purity and goodness.

(Note 1. *This is altered in the MS. to "two souls"; and "his" and "him" in the rest of the sentence to "their" and "them."* When Daunt began his story he had no knowledge, of course, of its very strange later development. Throughout I find odd little discrepancies resulting from his methods of work.

As you will see, he necessarily began reminiscently, —tracing with sufficient detail the circumstances which landed him in Dartmoor Prison. After his release 'on ticket,' while wandering on the Continent until his probationary term should have expired, he evidently began jotting down notes of anything of interest. It was only on his return to England, a free man, that he took to writing, from day to day, about what concerned him most deeply.

This mixed method seems to me not without its advantages. It enabled him to view the past as somewhat of a whole, and when the time came for better things he was able to set them down red-hot

from the anvil of his newly-quickenened soul. Then, at the end, when matters went with a rush, he had no time to correct and rearrange, as no doubt he had intended. And so, as I say, occasional discrepancies must be overlooked, and later interpolations permitted, for sake of the benefit to the whole. The more obvious of the interpolations I have placed within brackets, though possibly some may have escaped me.—J. O.)

It is not likely that my name, Noel Daunt, will cause any stir in the memory of any, save perhaps of two or three with whom I was on more or less friendly terms some ten years ago, and possibly of an official here and there with whom I had to come into momentary contact after my release from Princetown Jail.

The public memory is amazingly short,—as short almost as the proverbial sparrow's. But, between nine and ten years ago, the name was briefly notorious as that of a man who only escaped the gallows by his own inefficiency in the elementary art of murder.

I did, in fact, my very best to kill another man, for—as I held then—good and sufficient reason,—(*interpolated later*)—and am still only persuaded therefrom by the sweet compulsion of my dear Lady of the Moor.

The killing of a man is not so uncommon a matter

as necessarily to entail any great notoriety on his slayer, unless the unsavoury details happen to appeal to the lowest instincts of the man in the street and the woman in the kitchen.

But in this case the man who came within a hair's breadth of death was of high birth and position. His would-be slayer was of no birth or position—merely a man who wrote for the newspapers and so on. And no reason for the crime was forthcoming, even at the trial.

If the revolver—a new one—had not thrown high, both that other and myself would long since have appeared before that Higher Tribunal which sees the cause as well as the effect and mingles infinite mercy with the justice of its judgments.

And while it is true that the desire to repair my first blunder and complete my self-appointed task was all that kept me alive during my long imprisonment, that has now been taken from me entirely by the ministrations of my white Lady, and I have even come to thank God that it is so.

I said that that was all that kept me alive,—but there I spoke as a man. I have been led to the knowledge that God's ways are beyond us. For no one knows more about that than my dear Lady of the Moor, and she it was who taught me.

Yes, it is true, I love to write her name and to dwell upon it. For whenever I do so I see her sweet and gracious face as she strove with me, and

led me by degrees out of Darkness into the outer rim of her own marvellous Light.

I was born in the north of Ireland, my father was an Inverness man and my mother was of Belfast. He was a doctor with a considerable practice in the town of Londonderry. He was also a shrewd man of business and his investments invariably turned out well. I have none but the most gracious memories of both of them. These reproach me now.

He saw to it that I had a good education, having enjoyed the same himself and knowing the necessity and value of it in these strenuous days of the "weak to the wall."

She instilled into me, as a boy, the tenets of her own sterling, if somewhat narrow, religious beliefs, which held most other sects in doubtful tolerance and Catholics in especial abhorrence. Perhaps she held the reins too tightly. Perhaps an expanding mind needed more expansive outlook. After her death the practice of religious observance gradually lost its hold upon me. I cannot doubt that I have suffered therefrom.

Both my father and mother died during the great fever epidemic, and I was left with hardly a relative in the world except my sister Honor, ten years my junior. There had been a brother and sister in between, but they both died in their first year.

Honor was barely in her teens when our parents died, and that perhaps accounts for much. She was strikingly pretty, even as a girl of thirteen, with dark hair and laughing dark-blue eyes, and showed the promise of an unusually beautiful woman.

From the first day I made her acquaintance, the loveliest baby imaginable in my mother's arms, she was as the apple of my eye to me. I was a boisterous schoolboy of ten, scornful, I remember, of girls as inferior in the matter of games and deplorably lax regarding rules and boyish codes of honour. But this sparkling dark-eyed mite was quite a distinct breed of girl. She was my own and she filled my heart.

And to the very end that love for her never lessened or wavered. I thank God it lasted to the end—to the very end.

She was always somewhat self-willed and unbiddable, determined on her own way, and as difficult to turn from it as a mule, even when it was provably not the best way.

My own inclination had led me to letters,—in a small way so far, but still holding out sufficient inducement to push on towards the larger prizes ahead.

My father would have had it otherwise. He never could understand the aversion I had for his own most honourable profession. But there it was, and he was too wise a man to press me into it against my

will. Little as he thought, from the practical point of view, of writing as a living, he had a profound belief in a man doing, if it were at all possible, the thing he felt most drawn to and best fitted for.

“At any rate, you need never starve, my boy,” he said, “though I understand genius produces its best work under that most unnatural condition. If the writing provides only bread and butter, my little bit will help towards the jam, and it will make all the difference in life to you to be doing what you are keen to do,”—and so I stuck to letters.

Our little patrimony, when they were both so suddenly taken from us, amounted to about £500 a year, divided equally between us. But the capital was to remain invested as it then was until Honor was twenty-one, when, if we desired it, equitable division was to be made.

Honor, conscious already of the influence of her looks, and set on a high future for herself, insisted on going to a first-rate boarding-school in England. Where—she did not care,—only that it must be in England, and of the best. After that she had views of possible college, though how she came by them, or what ultimate end she envisaged, I could not find out. Possibly one of her mistresses had been at Girton or Newnham, and from her she had imbibed notions of the freedom and spaciousness of college life.

So, after careful enquiry, I entered her at that great private school in the south of England, near one of the well-known watering-places, which, under the wise and skilful guidance of its principals, has attained something of the nature of a national institution.

There she was perfectly happy and developed amazingly in every way. The fees and her dress-and-pocket-money took nearly all her income, but that did not trouble her in the slightest. She had her way and was more than content.

For myself, with such small reputation and credentials as my prentice-work had earned, and my small but always sure income of £250 a year, I came up to London, found rooms in the Temple, looking out on to Fountain Court,—somewhat of a bird's-eye view indeed, and the rooms were neither large nor any too convenient, but they sufficed and I was even proud of them,—and laid my fountain-pen in rest for a determined tilt at the world and fame.

I learned presently from my neighbours that my immediate predecessor in those rooms had also been a would-be literary man, who, having no £250 a year behind him, had quietly poisoned himself in my bedroom; and more than once, when things were contrary, I wished he had done it elsewhere.

So lugubriously indeed did his stark dead face, on which I had never set eyes except in imagination, weigh upon me, that at last I could stand him no

longer and I sought other quarters more cheerful in repute if not so in aspect.

In the country I had felt sure of myself and scoffed at the very notion of failure. In the mighty whirl of London I felt, for many months, no more than an outcast grain of dust, of less than no account, and an importunate nuisance to long-suffering editors who never seemed to want exactly the wares I had to offer.

But I was well fixed for hanging on, and I hung on. And, at last, having failed to drown me, the tide turned and work began to come my way. I made some friends also, and more acquaintances, and life wore a cheerier aspect. And in time, by sheer sticking power and such ability as was in me, I had won a certain position and had all I could do, though not yet quite of the class of work I aimed at.

Honor passed on to Newnham when she was nineteen, and after two years there expressed herself as ready to join me in London, and suggested a flat with all possible conveniences and a good outlook.

I had, of course, noted the surprising development in her looks and bearing whenever I had run down to see her at school, and on our holidays together. We had been over to Brittany, to Paris, and once as far as Switzerland.

During her terms at Newnham I had seen less of her. She had frequently elected to spend her vacations with one or other of her many college friends,

which I recognised as perfectly natural. When she joined me at last in London I thought her the most beautiful creature I had ever set eyes on.

She had more than mere outward beauty too. Her great dark-blue eyes brimmed with quick and fervent appreciation of life. She was merry-hearted and joyous of speech and laughter. Her wit was as nimble as her tongue, and her laugh was irresistible. She played well, sang well, and danced like a nymph.

To see her holding a circle of men enchanted with the rapid play of her varied armoury was a sight indeed. More than once I wondered on what or on whom she would set her heart next, and what would be the end of it all.

If one could only foresee. . . .

She had that genius for friendship which is the natural heritage of a beautiful and vivacious woman. (Rather, I would call it a wonderful faculty for making friends. For of late the word friendship has come to mean something very different and of infinitely finer quality to me. That is one more of the things My Lady has taught me.)

My way was naturally one of strenuous hard work. But I had no complaint to make on that score. I had hungered and thirsted for work, and now that it had come at last I gave myself to it heart and soul.

Honor's was the primrose path, and right merrily she danced along it. We met, though not always, at breakfast, and occasionally at dinner. More often,

of course, when I was busy on the work I liked best at home, though, even then, it was a rare thing for us to pass the evening together. Dinners, dances, theatre-parties, picnic-parties, river-parties claimed her in an unceasing round, and would accept no denials from one who added so much to their gaiety and success. Where Honor Daunt chose to grace these everything always went well, and Honor's appetite for the joys of life was insatiable.

Was I lacking in the matter in any respect? I have racked my heart with the question these many years and been tortured by it.

But, in truth, though I have not failed to take blame to myself, I do not see what I could have done.

For Honor was completely independent of me. She went her own way with her own friends. They were chiefly among her old school- and college-mates and those whom she came to know through them. They were of a higher social level than ourselves, though in the glimpses I got of them occasionally I never saw one among them who could compare with Honor. She was the life and soul of every merry assemblage, and yet so perfectly well-bred and so completely mistress of herself that thought of possible danger to her never entered my over-busy head.

She had known all, or most of, these people for years. She had grown up with them. Companions she was bound to have. What better companions

than these whom she knew so well, and by whom she was so well known and held in such liking and esteem ?

And yet—perhaps I was to blame, though sure am I that no matter how I had tried I could never have constrained her to quieter ways. It would only have resulted in division between us, and she was too dear to my soul for me to risk that.

Our means—though I was at this time making as much again as our combined incomes—did not of course permit us to entertain very much. But Honor, with all her joyous lightsomeness, was an excellent housekeeper, and she managed the finances of our small establishment, and the cook and maid who administered it, with admirable skill and tact, faculties she probably inherited from our mother, who was a most notable housewife.

So occasionally she gave little parties for her chosen ones—always perfectly thought out to the very last leaf and flower,—and it was there that I came into contact with her friends. But it was herself they wanted, not at all the little return she could make for their unbounded hospitalities.

Beyond those I met in this way I knew very little of her large acquaintance outside. From what I did see I accepted the rest in most perfect faith and never dreamed of ill.

I had at this time a regular engagement on one of the better-class London Weeklies, which, while

contributing handsomely to my income, still left me a certain amount of time for my own more personal and much more enjoyable work. And as a rule all that was required of me could be done in London.

Then the ever-growing unrest in certain sections of the workers up north began to exercise the public mind, and I was sent by my editor to look into and ventilate the matter with such acumen and common sense as I could bring to bear upon it. And this took me away three or four days every week for close on two months. It has been an occasional, and almost the only, grain of comfort to me in my darker times to think that the work I did up there made for justice and the righting of some wrongs.

Everything seemed going well with us. We were both, in our own ways, busy and happy. Of Honor's happiness there could be no possible doubt. Never had I known her so radiantly beautiful with the mere joy of living.

Then, like the proverbial bolt from the blue, the blow fell that broke my life and thrust me at last to the very gates of hell.

I returned from the north, one week-end, to find Honor gone, leaving behind her only a brief note of partial and most tantalising explanation.

“DEAR OLD No.,

“Don't be shocked!—and don't worry! I have gone with the only man in the world. We

are to be married in Paris, and I will write more fully afterwards. He is my very heart's desire,—the—only—man! And I am happiest of the happy. Forgive—

“Your loving

“HONOR.”

I was utterly confounded. I had had no remotest idea that her affections had settled on any specially favoured suitor.

Many, I had not doubted, would have rejoiced to fill that high office, but my limited opportunities had afforded me no chance of making their acquaintance. She had had scores of friends of whom I knew nothing.

I was absolutely at sea in the matter, without so much as one single clue to guide me which way to turn.

(Indeed, if I had only known it, my feet were even then stepping into the black waters which would by this time have rolled over my soul, but for my dear Lady of the Moor.

But there is much to tell before I come to her, and for a proper understanding of all she has done for me, it has got to be told.)

Groping like a man in the dark for some thread, however small, I questioned the maids. I had to do something, for my mind was in a whirl of anxious doubts, and at my heart there was a little icy finger

of fear. I knew so much more of the possibilities of men than any girl possibly could know.

It might be absolutely all right. The man might be all she believed him. He must certainly be something very much above the common to have captured Honor's heart so completely.

And—only too well I knew—it might be absolutely all wrong,—as wrong as hell itself. Men,—God in heaven!—men, from the point of view of Fleet Street, were mostly—or, at all events, were mostly said to be,—all wrong. The stories one heard of even the highest and most publicly esteemed! One wondered sometimes if peradventure even ten reasonably decent-living men were to be found in the whole of London.

And Honor, I knew only too well, would give herself unstintedly to the man she loved.

I prayed again in those days, as I had never prayed before—for I had latterly drifted out of the habit of prayer—I prayed in very anguish of heart that the man, whoever he was, might be all he should be,—or that, if he were not, he might become so for Honor's sake.

Those were, up till then, the blackest, sickest days of my life. I have had blacker since, but none more sickening in the feeling of utter, blind, helpless misery. For in my blacker, later days, I always had in me that which kept me screwed tight up to the pitch of a deadly and unswerving resolve.

Of the two maids, only Lucille, the housemaid, could give me any information, and little to the purpose at that. Indeed she obviously looked upon the whole proceeding as perfectly right and natural, and seemed to think this anxiety—which I did my best not to show, but which she nevertheless perceived—regarding Miss Honor's marriage as not only quite unnecessary, but even as unbecoming and lacking in brotherly feeling.

She had seen Miss Honor's gentleman. Yes. He had called for her on two occasions, and finally on the day when, with her travelling trunk ready packed, she awaited him—as I could picture, from the girl's account—with her whole being on the spring for the great adventure.

His name she had never heard.

His appearance. Oh—one of the finest, grandest, noblest-looking gentlemen she had ever set eyes on. Might have been a prince or a duke or anything. Nothing hardly could be too big for him, and so on. All of which, from the identification point of view, was valueless.

I could do nothing but wait for Honor's promised letter, and each day's delay in its arrival made my heart grow sicker.

I fought away my fears in the daytime and kept them at bay by strenuous work, though work had never been so difficult and distasteful to me before. But in the night the sick fears grew and

grew, and rode me like hell-hounds, and gave me no rest.

No letter reached me.

I grew sick, bodily, mentally, spiritually. My Honor, the dearest and nearest thing life had held for me, had gone out into the great black void and was no more.

I thought of her as the radiant dark-eyed baby, lying like some wonderful new jewel in our mother's arms,—as the sparkling, happy school-girl, with the flashing laugh and joyous word for everybody,—as the beautiful graceful woman who could bend any man to her will by a word and a smile.

And now, some man had bent her to his will and she was gone—out into the void.

Who could that man be ?

3.

THAT resolved itself into the one and only question of my life. For if he had wronged her he should most assuredly pay the price. And the price was death.

I gave up my newspaper work. In justice to the paper and myself I could not go on with it. I tried my best to settle to my other writings. But it was impossible. Honor, and what had become of her, filled my mind and heart to the exclusion of all else.

No other girl or woman had ever quickened my pulse or troubled my heart. I had not been thrown much into the way of women, beyond such as Honor's wealthy acquaintances, and they had no appeal for me. Handsome many of them were, and always exquisitely gowned, but that always seemed to me to be the extent of them ;—that and a crazy pursuit of pleasures,—which all seemed only to bore them to death—solely for the purpose of getting through their futile days.

So there was nothing whatever to distract my mind and heart from their painful broodings, and these told heavily on me.

My work grew distasteful to me. My mind went wandering persistently after Honor, in an agony of painful wondering as to what could have become of her, and I could settle to nothing.

I had been at work on a novel from which I had hoped much. But the imagined troubles and trials of my brain-folk were as nothing to the actualities of my own,—pale, bloodless phantoms with no breath of life in them, they did not interest even myself.

I took to restless, purposeless wanderings, with some vague hope in me, possibly, that somewhere I might chance upon her. But the simple fact was that the shock of it all had jangled me completely, and I scarce knew what I did and cared still less.

I grew lean and haggard.

One of my Fleet Street friends,—Johnstone of the ‘Westminster,’ I remember it was,—met me one day up West, and after a surprised but still cordial greeting, linked his arm in mine and tried with quiet insistence to draw me out as to my trouble.

But—by nature reserved, and most of all in all that concerned my deeper feelings—how could I possibly disclose the matter? I was grateful to him for his excellent intention, but was unable to respond to it. Finally he gave me a good-natured homily on the mistake and risks of using drugs, and went his way dubiously in spite of my scornful denials.

He was an excellent fellow and a true friend, and proved it later. But even to him I could not unburden myself.

One day, coming back to the flat,—I had kept things going just as when Honor was there, in the hope that she would yet return, and with the feeling that on the merest chance of that it must still be waiting there, just as it always had been, ready to welcome her. But I have no doubt the girls had a very easy time of it and did much as they pleased, for I was easily satisfied.

One day, coming in tired from one of these long futile ramblings, Lucille met me at the sitting-room door with a face all agog with news of some kind.

“Here he is, sir!” she burst out. “I’ve got him!”

“Who?”

“Miss Honor’s young—er—fiongsay.”

“Where then?” I snapped.

And she picked up an illustrated society paper—one of Honor’s ordering which I had neglected to stop—and pointed triumphantly to the portrait of a man, illustrating some inconsequential personal paragraph.

I bent eagerly to look, and straightened up again with a savage click of the tongue and a snappish, “Nonsense, girl! You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“ You bet—beg pardon, sir !—I mean, it’s him to the life. I’d swear it on the book in any court in the land, divorce or Old Bailey. He’s not the kind you’d overlook in a crowd. It’s him, sir, I swear.”

“ All right, Lucille, swear away if you want to. But don’t say it out loud or you’ll be getting into trouble. You’re mistaken. That’s all I can say.”

For it was the portrait of a man of high birth and higher reputation, a man of eminence in military circles, an expert in his own special branch, whose name was known and held in honour throughout the land. Lucille had been misled by some accidental likeness. Every man, they say, has a double.

Nevertheless, the insidious suggestion stuck and rankled.

Had I heard whispers concerning this man ? I had heard whispers concerning almost every man, and appraised them at their worth.

Was he one of the whited sepulchres ?—one of the wolves in sheep’s clothing ?—one of the wrong ones whom the world accepts because it does not know ?

I could not tell. I had heard so much. But at last when, after days of savage brooding, the barb pricked hard in my heart, I wandered one evening down to Fleet Street, lit upon some old acquaintances in one of their haunts there, and in time turned the focus of talk upon the man in question . . . and got more than enough for my peace of mind.

If half that was sub-rosaly hinted at was true . . . Lucille might be right after all. But one could not be sure that there was any grain of truth in it. Does not every public man notoriously walk with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies ?

Nevertheless, the possibility took root and festered, and poisoned my days and my nights. No matter who he was or what, if he had done ill by Honor, my mind was made up that the price should be his life.

I quietly made enquiries as to where the man in question was and had been of late.

He was said to be abroad. I determined to go abroad also. I was doing less than no good at home. As well go abroad and possibly find diversion from my nightmare in change of scene.

And, no doubt, down in my heart was some vague kind of a hope that, since that other man was also somewhere abroad, chance might bring me across him,—which only shows to what depth of childishness the long-continued brooding of a jangled mind can bring one.

It was four months since Honor left me. She had obviously no intention of returning. I dismissed the girls, stored the furniture, placed the flat in an agent's hands, and presently found myself in Paris.

But even Paris depends as much on one's inner feelings and appreciation as on its own powers to interest and amuse, and I found myself detesting it.

In any case, it was out of the question that she would linger there, where every tenth person she came across might be an old acquaintance.

I rambled further afield,—into Switzerland, Tyrol, the Bavarian Alps, up into Bohemia, to Vienna, to Buda-Pesth, to Linz. There was no knowing where such a man might go—if he were the man,—but doubtless—nay, surely—to the most unlikely and impossible places he could think of. And they were innumerable, and search was idiotic, and I knew it, and yet I rambled on, from one unlikely place to another, and found nothing of course. I was a modern Wandering Jew, finding no rest for the sole of my foot and no solace for my troubled mind.

I came down through Styria and Carinthia, and Carniola to Trieste and Venice, rambled through the towns and villages of the Campagna and Umbria and Tuscany, and found myself, after close on a year's wanderings, on the Riviera.

I went to Monaco, expecting nothing but possible distraction,—and found something of what I had sought so long.

I had passed the censors of the ante-chamber and rambled into the rooms. The tables were crowded as usual, especially the great roulette-table, and I sauntered round the skirts of the crowd, aloofly interested to learn what the excitement was.

“Tiens!” said one to another at my side.
“Qu’elle jeu ce soir, la Belle Russe!”

“Et gagne, mon beau. Elle a bien la chance de——”

And then a movement in the crowd edged me nearer the table and my eyes were drawn to the centre of interest.

It was a woman of most striking appearance, young, graceful, beautiful, and most tastefully and beautifully dressed. She was playing maximum every time and winning tremendously. And her face was a curious mixture of aloofness and interest. The notes and gold flung towards her by the croupier she thrust carelessly to the pile in front of her, uncounted, scarce looked at. The momentary dance of the ball in the whirling wheel, and the announcements of the result, alone quickened her interest for a moment.

I was gazing fascinated, hypnotised, for it was undoubtedly Honor. It could be nobody but Honor. But the year had made great changes in her.

The beautiful face had on it just a touch of hardness,—only a touch, and another might never have perceived it. But to me, who had known only the purest joy of life in that face, the loss of it was painfully apparent. It was all Honor's beauty and more, but it lacked that one saving element. There was more strength in it, but there was no hope,—instead, a careless, somewhat haughty insouciance, an aloofness, a contempt of life and everything in it that told me much.

Her neighbours at the table had taken to following her lead with their trifling stakes. She paid not the slightest attention to them.

There is undoubtedly compulsion in a fixed, unswerving gaze, and possibly my vehement thought found its way to hers. She raised her head suddenly and swept the opposing circle of faces with those wonderful dark-blue eyes of hers, with a questioning look. It settled on mine and stopped.

A touch of additional colour wavered in her face for a moment—and the spell was broken.

She turned again to her play, but now everything went against her. Her pile of notes and gold dwindled rapidly. I wondered she did not rise at once and save what was left. Perhaps it was a point of honour with her.

When the table in front of her was at last bare, she beckoned to a white-silk-stockinged attendant who was circling about with glasses of champagne on a silver salver. She quietly drank a glass and rose, passed like a queen through the lane of staring faces that opened before her, and swept out of the rooms.

I followed her—out into the soft velvet beauty of the southern night. She turned into the gardens and took the path among the motionless palms and cacti and oleanders to the sea-walk, and presently put her arms on the stone balustrade and leaned over, looking down into the tideless sea. Dark, soundless waters below, glittering stars in a dark

sky above, the garish white buildings of the Casino on the right all ablaze with lights and resonant with the music of the band, and her thoughts as she leaned there waiting for me. . . .

“Honor!”—and I did my utmost to keep any slightest tone of reproach out of my voice.

“Well?”—her voice had lost all its fluty joyousness. It was a little hard, like her face—to me, at all events, though it was a very sweet voice still,—even to me.

“Oh—my dear!—my dear!”—I could not help it, for my heart felt like to burst.

“Don’t, No. ! . . . I’m past all that. It’s too late. I burned my boats——”

“Dear ! It is never too late.”

“I know better.”

“Thank God, I’ve found you at last. I have searched and searched——”

“Why did you ? ”

“Why ? Can you ask, dear ? Because you are more to me than anything in life. Oh, come away and we will start afresh.”

“Too late, No. ! I couldn’t do it. I’m sorry it’s turned out so. Believe me, it was not what I intended. . . .”

“Oh ! ” I groaned. “Tell me, dear ! How was it ? . . . Who was it ? ”

“As if I would ! ” she said, with scathing scorn. “Lay it all to my charge——”

“I don’t. I won’t. You have just said you never intended it to turn out so. And I know it. You could not. You! . . . Oh, my dear!”

“No, . . . it is true. . . . I did not intend it. But it fell out so, and there is no more to be said. . . . And, you see,” she said softly, and truly as though the words held sweet savour for her,—“I love him still.”

“You—love him still! It is not possible,—the scoundrel!”

“Not only possible, but so,” she said, with quiet insistence. “And nothing will ever alter it.”

“Are you with him still?”

“Oh no. We parted months ago. Here they take me for a Russian. We need not go into that.”

“Have you money? I saw you losing terribly in there.”

“Your fault,” she said quietly, but with no complaint in it. “But it’s of no consequence. I had won it all before losing it. I have plenty. . . . And you, No.?”

I shook my head. I could not tell her that her going in that way had broken my life and left me crippled of hope or concern about myself.

“I have been constantly on the look-out for the book,” she said.

“It hangs fire. I have had . . . other things that took all my time.”

It was in my mind, and much within my desire,

to question her further,—as to the present—and the future,—and, if the chance offered, somewhat more as to the past. But it was mightily difficult, and while I was still trying to frame my enquiries in terms of least offence, she saw through me and put an end to it all with a quiet but evidently final, “I must get back to my hotel. No,—you must not come, No. ! Stop here, please. It would not do for me to be seen with you—or anyone else.”

“Where are you staying? Surely I may call on you. There is so very much——”

“No, you can’t call on me. Be here to-morrow night about this time and I will see . . .” and she went swiftly through the dark alleys between the motionless palms, and after due interval I went back to my little hotel in Monaco.

I was there, as she had appointed, the next night and the next, and every night for a week. But she never came, and cautious, casual enquiry at last informed me that *La Belle Russe* had left the principality the morning after we met.

Honor had deliberately gone out into the void again.

I could do no more. Our meeting, and still more this abrupt and self-imposed parting, wounded me sorely. It was no good seeking her further. She had shown me only too plainly that it was her wish to be left alone,—left to go her own way to the appointed end, whatever that might be.

I was sick of wanderings. Indeed, I was sick of life,—sick of my fellows and all the common rounds and futile strivings.

I would very gratefully have ended my own broken life there and then, but that in me there was an ever-growing desire and determination that, before I myself went out, that other man, who had dealt us so foul a blow, should first be called to account. And an account such as that could only be settled, and settled finally, in one way.

That thought became an obsession with me. It grew and it grew till it possessed me wholly, body and soul.

He had done more than spill blood. He had spilled to the void a lovely human soul. No punishment of man could adequately reach him. But such as in me lay should be meted to him, though it cost me my own life—ay, and my own soul also.

And I did not, as yet, even know for certain who the man was. It would be worse than useless tackling him till I knew. That would only lay me open to prosecution as a madman or a blackmailer and would accomplish nothing. For this strange anomalous world of ours condones the man's offence, but flings his victim to the outer darkness. I, only, could bring him to account, and that I was determined to do as soon as I knew.

I rambled back into Switzerland. Solitary, among the Mighty White Ones of the earth, I had

some kind of hope that my wound might heal somewhat, though the determination to avenge it never slackened for one instant.

Up on the sunny heights above the Lake of Thun, sunny even when the snows lay deep and all communication with the lower world was cut off for days at a time, I spent a whole year—at Sigriswil and Beatenberg. And in both I was regarded as a harmless lunatic, who spent all his time rambling in the most out-of-the-way places, but paid his way and so was to be tolerated.

Then I turned homewards and got as far as the Picard coast, and cast anchor again amid the lonely dunes of Cap Gris-Nez,—with the bluff white cliffs of England looming across the tumbling gray waters,—England, where, sooner or later, I should come across that other and accomplish in him the expiation of his crime, and then in myself my own.

These various periods of quiet, simple living brought me back the bodily health and strength which the wearing trouble had sapped. But so much a part of my very soul had my intention to kill the man become, that the renewal of my body affected the determination of my mind not at all—unless in the way of strengthening it.

The man who could do this thing was a blot on creation. It was given to me to remove that blot,—to cleanse creation of him,—to end his power for further harm in the world.

4.

I HAD been back in London close on six months, mingling once more to some extent with my old friends in Fleet Street, and welcomed by them as something in the way of a change from the drab routine of life.

They were puzzled of course by my sudden dropping out of things, and still more by my refusal to attempt any piecing of the broken threads.

But why should I? I had only one ambition left, and that had to do with the breaking of threads, not with the re-piecing of them.

Johnstone, the man who had once, in the beginning of troubles lectured me on the subject of drugs, was my closest friend—as his action in trying to turn me from sins of which I was not guilty proved. He was greatly concerned about me.

“You had the ball at your feet, my boy,” he urged. “And it’s not too late to try another kick. You seem fit and well again. Jump in and do your work in the world. I don’t know what you’ve been up to all this time, but it seems to have done you no great harm. I’m quite ready to believe it wasn’t

drugs, though I'm bound to say it looked uncommonly like it, yon time. . . . Down there they're saying it's some woman you've gone crazy for. Take the advice of an old man, my son,"—he was perhaps a year older than myself,—“and let up on it. The baggages are not worth wasting one's life over. It's the only life you'll have, remember, and we'll all be a long time dead,” and I thanked him for his good intentions.

I made casual enquiries concerning the man whose portrait Lucille had pointed out to me, but could learn nothing definite. In public esteem he stood as high as ever. Any contrary whispers never got beyond smoking-room doors.

I waited. There was nothing else I could do.

Then at last the long suspense came to a sudden end. A telegram came to me at the Press Club one afternoon, and an hour later I was on my way to Paris.

It was from Honor, and said briefly : “Come to me,”—and gave an address in the Rue St. Honoré.

I arrived at the Gare du Nord at eleven o'clock and drove at once to the Rue St. Honoré.

It was one of the great old houses, with a huge porte-cochère and a massive nail-studded door with a smaller door in the right-hand valve.

I rang the bell, the small door opened, and I stood in the high vaulted tunnel-way leading to the courtyard behind.

“Your name, monsieur?” asked a voice from the window of the concierge’s lodge.

I gave my name.

“Monsieur is expected.”

He clanged a bell upstairs, and a footman in quietly rich livery appeared in the wide stairway on the right and signed to me to follow him.

Up two flights of the wide polished steps, and I was shown into an ante-room, small but richly furnished.

And immediately there came to me there a tall very fine-looking man, with grizzled hair and moustache, and a face full of deepest distress.

“You are Monsieur Daunt?”

I bowed, wondering much what it all meant.

He took both my hands in his and with a shake in his voice said, “She is dying,—your sister. We are thankful you are in time, Monsieur Daunt. Come at once. I will explain things afterwards,” and he led me into another room—a handsomely-furnished bedroom.

And there, propped among an abundance of the softest of pillows, lay my dear Honor—very near to death, as I saw at a glance.

To my surprise a priest stood by the bedside, an aged man of very gentle and benevolent aspect, and a nun or nursing sister in a great white coiffe, and from one or other of them there emanated a faint sweet smell of incense.

Death was hovering very near. There is no mistaking The Presence. I was only just in time.

She was in full possession of her senses, and so amazingly little changed that, but for that dreadful oppressive silence, in which it seemed to me that I could actually sense the soundless coming of the All-Powerful One, I should have deemed her ill indeed, but very far from dying.

Her face was thinner, the great dark-blue eyes seemed unnaturally large in the misty hollows of her cheeks. They glowed at sight of me with a sudden radiance—as stars shine up out of a fern-fringed pool when the cloud that has hid them passes away. The hand I gently kissed, as I sank on my knees by the bed, was very beautiful still. She had always been proud of her hands. And she smiled wanly down at me.

“Oh—my dear! my dear!” I sobbed, for it was pitiful beyond the telling to see her going so,—like a fair white lily broken by the switch of a careless stick.

“I am going, dear. And quite happy now. Forgiven, I think. . . . And you?”

“Don’t go, Honor! Oh, my dear, don’t go! You are dearer to me than ever. You must not go!”

“Too late, dear!—Too late!” she murmured very sadly.

And then, with a rush that upset my reasonable judgment and carried me beyond the bounds, the tragedy of her broken life swept down upon me . . . the thought of that other who was the cause of it all, who had brought her to this, boiled up in me, and boiled over.

I strained towards her and jerked hoarsely,—in a whisper, but she heard,—“Who was it, Honor? . . . Tell me, dear, before you go . . . !”—and then, in a volcanic eruption of most desperate fury lest this only possible chance of learning the truth should pass, I asked, “Was it ——?” and named the man whose portrait had been pointed out to me by Lucille.

For one brief instant I saw the startled horror in her eyes—mixed,—oh, amazing sight!—with a tenderness that had not been there even for me.

“No!” she cried, with sudden accession of vigour. “Oh—no! . . . No! . . .” and then she fell back dead, and I knew from what I had seen in her eyes that that was the man.

“Pax!—pax Dei vobiscum!” murmured the old priest gently, and with a catch in his voice, as he raised his trembling old hands reverently over her. And then—“Requiescat in pace!”

There was a choking sob at my side, and the tall fine man with the grizzled hair touched my arm and said:

“Come!”

I bent and kissed the beautiful face that had been dearer to me than any face in the world since I was ten,—kissed it for the last time, with sobs in my chest that came near rending it, and then I followed him out of the room.

He took me to an adjoining room, panelled to the ceiling with dark wood and like all the rest of the great house most beautifully furnished. That knowledge I came to later. For the moment all I noticed was a red fire on a low hearth and a table with eatables and silver drawn up close to it.

The grizzled man sat himself heavily down in a chair and signed to me to sit also. He rested his elbows on the carved arms of the chair and dropped his face into his hands, and so remained for several minutes while I examined what I could see of him with a very natural curiosity.

He was a man of fifty or fifty-five, I judged,—of very fine carriage and manner, an aristocrat to the finger-tips without a doubt.

He looked up at last and wearily across at me.

“You will pardon me, Monsieur Daunt! But you will understand. For you also loved her.”

“She has been the one dear thing in the world to me since I was ten years old—when she was born.”

“And that is five-and-twenty years ago to-day.”

I stared at him. “It is true. I had forgotten it was her birthday. My poor Honor! . . .” and we fell silent over the bitter sadness of it all.

“ Now will you please explain how——” I asked at last, for before going further, or accepting any hospitality from him, I must know.

“ Yes, I will tell you, Monsieur Daunt. My loss in her is greater almost than yours. You loved her as a sister. I loved her with the love of a man who would at any moment have given everything he had, and his very life, for her. . . . And she would not let me. . . . It is over twelve months since we met,”—perhaps he noticed the pinch in my brows at the word, for he leaned across and placed his firm white hand on my knee, and said deeply : “ Do not mistake. There was never an ill thought between us. I loved her and honoured her as never any other woman. . . . She was living very quietly at Antibes, where I was slowly convalescing after an illness. Innocent accident made us acquainted and our friendship ripened. She was suffering even then from this that has taken her from us. But she was brave ! . . . Mon Dieu !—The patient bravery of her ! She was wounded to the death and showed no sign. . . .”

“ What was it ? ” I jerked gruffly.

“ A broken heart, monsieur ! . . . Simply that, —a broken heart ! . . . Such a brave pure heart to be despoiled in such a way ! She would never tell me who, though she bravely told me all else. And the fault was not hers, monsieur,—only the sorrow and the suffering. She trusted him implicitly

because she loved him wholly. And—and that is the marvel—she loved him still—right to the end, and no other could ever take his place in the brave big heart. The wonder of it ! Can a man love like that ? I would have doubted—until I came to love her myself. For her I would willingly have given my life at any moment. I have wealth. I have honours,—a name linked with my country's history. I offered her all if she would wed me. But, no—— She came to care for me as she had never cared for any save one other man. But marry me she would not—for my own sake, she said, and because that other man still owned her heart's best love. The marvel of it ! He ought to have been a great and a good man——”

“ You do not know then——”

“ She never would tell me. Everything else,—she kept back nothing from me. But his name—no ! I think she feared if I learned it I would kill him.”

“ That is what I am going to do,” I said.

He started up and stood facing me with eager outstretched hands.

“ You know him ? And he still lives ? Dieu-de-Dieu-de-Dieu ! ”

“ Only now I learned it—just as she was going. I asked her. I named a name, and with her last breath she denied it. But, monsieur, there was that in her eyes which told me the truth in spite of her. She died with the beautiful lie on her lips.”

“It was like her! Oh, but it was like her! . . . And now, monsieur——” and he eyed me hungrily.

“As I told you, I am going to kill him for the wrong that he did her.”

He eyed me thoughtfully, and then said, “In your country that means your own life too. Here—no!—But we regard these matters differently.”

“My life is of small account. For years—ever since I lost her—it has waited only for this. I shall give it willingly.”

We sat into the morning and he told me much of his great white friendship with Honor. If she could have put out of her heart the love for that other who had treated her so ill, she could have had everything the heart of woman as a rule desires. She could, in short, have been a duchesse, and wife of a very noble gentleman, the last of the main line of one of the oldest and wealthiest families of France. But for love of that other—in spite of all—she put it all aside and would not. And the grievous sorrow of this man before me testified to his equal love for her.

It is a contrary world at times and I sorrowed with him.

I stayed with him for the funeral. He buried her in that strange vast city of the dead, Père Lachaise, —quietly, as she would have wished, and in a quiet corner away from the crowd, and told me gloomily of the exquisite little chapel he designed to raise over her.

"She would let me do so little for her while she lived," he said quietly. "Now I can do as I will."

And after thinking over that for a time, I asked, "Is it herself you would please or yourself, monsieur le Duc?"

"Ah—if I could only please her!—myself is nothing."

"Then, if you will permit me, spend all that money rather in some good service to the living—perhaps to those who suffer wrongs and sorrows like hers. That will give her the greater joy."

"You think she would know?"

"Without a doubt."

"Then . . ." after a long and thoughtful silence,—"What of yourself? Will that which you contemplate please her?"

"It will not. I have considered all that. I forfeit the right no doubt ever to meet her pure soul again. But . . . a man like that must be removed—even at such a price—for this is not the only case. He is beyond the pale. It must be stopped."

"You will not tell me his name?"

"Better not. You will know."

"But in case you fail?"

"I shall not fail."

The day after the funeral he handed me certain papers of Honor's in a large sealed envelope, and I bade him farewell and returned to London.

I SET about my preparations without delay.

The papers Honor had left for me consisted of her will and details of her small estate. It was intact, as she had received it at her own request on her twenty-first birthday. She had simply drawn the interest and the capital was untouched. She left everything to me, and I had a new will drawn up by my good friend Denver—my solicitor, —and better solicitor and better friend no man ever had—leaving it all, in case of anything happening to me, to some very distant relatives whom I had never even seen.

Then I bought a revolver and made myself as familiar with it as time permitted.

For all the old craving for settlement with that other man was upon me in ten times its former force. And the days that passed without bringing us face to face were lost days of unutterable longing.

I need not go deeply into this part of my story. The bare facts the papers had. All that lay behind was between myself and God.

They declined my plea of 'Guilty' at the trial,

in the hope of arriving at some understanding of what was to most a great mystery. But, thank God, they learned nothing, and Honor's name was never even mentioned.

I learned the times he was generally to be found at home. Late one night I went to his house, obtained audience with him, under pretext of an urgent private message from the War Office, and confronted him with that one ill-deed of his, which had spoiled the light of the sun for me.

He was in his library writing by a shaded lamp. He looked up as I was shown in and the man withdrew.

"Well?" he asked. "What is it?"

"I am Noel Daunt," I said simply.

"Daunt?"—he cast back in his mind for the context, and swung round his chair to face me.

"You stole my sister Honor,"—and he straightened up in his chair and looked keenly at me.

He must have seen in my eyes what was coming. But he did not flinch. He simply sat and looked at me, and then put one elbow on the arm of his chair and shaded his eyes with his hand,—thinking hard,—of Honor may be.

Yes, he was a very fine-looking man, verging on forty, I should say, with a face like one of the Roman emperors,—I could not say which,—but it was very finely modelled, with strong well-cut features and a wide frank brow. His hair was

frosting about the ears. It gave him added distinction. Even at that terrible moment, when it only needed a movement to hurl him before the judgment-seat with all his sins upon him,—when our two lives were on the knife-edge of Fate and one little second would end it all,—I remember wondering how such perfection of manly beauty came to be so incredibly wedded with such dire lack of the moral sense.

And he was a brave man. He knew what was coming and he made no effort to escape. He probably knew it would be futile.

A brass disc with a movable finger lay on the table alongside him, for the summoning of this one or the other of his household. He never offered to touch it. It would have been useless, of course, in any case, and he knew it.

“ You stole her,” I said again. “ She died a week ago. And now,—you pay ! ” and I shot him down as I would have shot a dangerous dog.

I made no attempt to escape. Why should I ? All I wanted now was the end of the whole matter, and final peace or whatever might follow.

And I felt no slightest compunction even when he pitched forward out of his chair and lay still on the rug at my feet. Compunction did, indeed, presently come upon me, but that was only when I learned to my bitter disappointment that the man was not dead. But that came later.

All that followed—for months, until I came fully to myself again in Dartmoor Prison—is vague and shadowy in my remembrance.

And that, I suppose, was natural enough. For years all the evil forces within me had been living and waiting for this culminating moment, and straining towards it like hell-hounds in the leash.

When it came, and passed, the terrible tension relaxed in a moment and left me flaccid and unstrung. There was only one other thing before me,—the short final scene of all, and I had schooled myself to view it with equanimity. The actual bodily suffering was small, I understood, the mental torture great. But this last I would endure, with such fortitude as I could summon, as a necessary part of my expiation.

Oh, if I could have brought myself to end it all there and then ! To fall, with a bullet through the brain, across his body would indeed have made a clean and dramatically complete end, and to me infinitely the easier end.

But—my perverted mind drew a line of strictest demarcation between these two things. Self-slaughter would be murder pure and simple, without any possible justification. It had in it, besides, something of cowardice and weak shirking of consequences. Whereas the killing of this man was simply the execution of a righteous judgment,—the barring from further mischief of one who had wrought much

ill in the world,—the possible salvation of many who might otherwise come under his malign influence.

That, at all events, was how the matter presented itself to me. I am not justifying anything I have done. I am simply endeavouring to make the whole thing plain from my then point of view.

(And, as I look back now, and see things from the higher standpoint of these later influences, I cannot be too thankful for the bungling job I made of him, and for the feeling which restrained me from taking my own life. Had I ended the matter in that fashion, what would I not have missed? My bungling and my aversion to suicide saved alive two souls and secured the happiness of the best of women.)

Matters took, I suppose, their usual course. I have no recollection of any special indignities or bodily sufferings. Indeed I am inclined to think that I was treated with extreme consideration.

And pondering, later on, upon all that befell me during this whole time of examinations, remands, and final trial, I incline to the belief that those in whose hands I was, gauged, more fully than the outside public possibly could, probable reasons for my apparently mad and unwarrantable deed.

For myself, I said not one word. The first startled constable's official warning as to ill-timed babbling on my part and its possible consequences was quite unnecessary. Least said, soonest mended.

But this was beyond mending and I had nothing whatever to say about it.

Only to the Superintendent at the police-station, who gravely took down the charge and eyed me keenly, I said, "It's all right. I did it," and he held up a peremptory hand to prevent my saying more.

But I wanted the matter finished and done with, and all the necessary, I suppose, but to me excessively wearisome official business, was galling and hateful. The thing was done. All I desired now was to get it and myself ended and put out of sight for ever.

That best of friends, Henry Denver,—stars to his crown when his time comes, for every good thought I have had of him!—came to me the moment his appalled eyes lit upon the news in the papers.

It was from him that I learned that, even as an executioner of righteous justice, I had failed,—that the man was not dead, though his life hung in the balance and must do for many days.

No worse news could I have had, and it plunged me into profoundest gloom. One bullet had ploughed through the top of his head. The other had struck an inch or more above his heart instead of through it. The revolver had thrown high, or my hand had jerked slightly upwards under the nervous strain of the moment.

Beyond expressing my regret at my failure I declined to give any explanations even to Denver.

He argued, he pleaded. My life, or at all events

—since the matter had turned out so untowardly—my liberty for anything between five and fifteen years was at stake. Explanations, reasons, might minimise the term. But explanations involved the dragging in of my dear Honor's name and reputation, and I refused.

He did everything that man, lawyer, and best of friends could do. All I asked of him was that if he could do anything whatever to make a speedy end of the matter he would do it,—and all my financial affairs I placed unreservedly in his hands.

There followed many weeks of what seemed to me official foolery ; necessary no doubt for the safeguarding of the public weal and the rights of the individual. But for me all intolerably wearisome and inconsequential.

But, all through, I have no single complaint to make—except of the law's delays.

Came at long last the day of trial at the Old Bailey, and I welcomed it as another might welcome freedom.

But it is in my mind no more than a blur, like a badly-made cinematograph film, full of faults and rents, and raced through at express speed, though, indeed, it seemed endless.

I remember the spiked rails of the dock, and the sympathetic kindness of the bluff official who shared it with me,—and the murmurous crowd behind,—and various counsel in wigs and gowns,—but

chiefly the judge who was to decide the length of my imprisonment.

He was a man of distinguished appearance and severe aspect. I had heard him try and sentence many a criminal, with no slightest expectation of ever having to submit to the same at his hands.

But, long sentence or short, it mattered little to me. For during these wretched weeks of waiting one sole resolve had been hardening in me, and that was that, if that other man still lived when I was free again, I would complete my work, and this time make sure beyond the possibility of doubt.

To make the shortest possible of the present matter,—which was only an annoying interlude in life's rough programme—I had wished to plead 'Guilty' and so make a quick end.

But they would not have it so, and Denver told me afterwards they had hoped, by trying the case out, to arrive at reasons and possibly extenuating circumstances.

They arrived at neither, and when at last the jury had given their inevitable verdict of attempted murder, his lordship, before passing sentence, bade me stand up and answer him one question.

I wondered much what it could be, but faced him unflinchingly and I hope not brazenly.

He raked me through and through with an eye which had set many a criminal heart kicking, and I gazed quietly back at him.

I wondered suddenly if he knew the secret reputation attributed by the whispers of the smoking-room to the man I had shot. And the silence in the crowded court was profound as all waited for what he would say.

“Had you at any time in your life come into personal contact with your victim before you made this attempt on him?”

“Never, my lord!” and as I bowed to him our eyes met and held, and I knew that he knew.

He proceeded to give me a short homily on the enormity of my deed, and the impossibility of the law exacting anything but heavy penalty for it.

My hope of ultimately completing my work receded into a very remote background. The man would probably be dead before I came out.

“Seven years’ penal servitude.”

My heart leaped gratefully. It might have been very much more.

And when Denver saw me for a few minutes down below, he said: “I’m glad for your sake, Daunt. But I don’t understand it. He’s a pretty hard man, as a rule. However—you get off fairly lightly. Five years is the minimum, and it might have run to ten or even more. I wonder what it was turned him in your favour.”

But I knew,—or thought I did. And I have, in pondering the matter since, felt certain that his lordship saw that there was that behind which could

not be disclosed,—that he probably knew or guessed what the nature of it might be,—and that possibly he dealt lightly with me in view of the fact that he believed my persistent silence was maintained for the purpose of shielding some other person.

One other thing Denver said in our brief interview. I had done my utmost throughout that weary time in court—when they must spend hour after hour in proving to their own completest satisfaction that I really had done that which I had never had any wish to deny having done—to preserve an absolutely impassive face. Denver's remark showed me that I had not succeeded as I had hoped.

He eyed me searchingly as we sat in the bare prison room, and asked, "Is this the end of it, Daunt?"

"The end?" I said wearily. "What do you mean?"

"Can't you be satisfied, and let it all end here? You have all along refused to enlighten me as to your reasons for doing it, and I'm not going to press you now. But, my dear fellow, for God's sake and your own, make an end of it now. I'll tell you why I say this. After the sentence, just as you turned to go, Saville, your counsel,—he'd been watching you keenly, and he rather prides himself on his skill in reading faces,—well, he turned to me and said, 'When does our friend come out again with luck, Denver?' . . . 'In five years and three months if

he loses none of his time.' . . . ' Well, in five years and six months you'll have him on your hands again, unless I'm very much mistaken. He means to finish the job properly as soon as he gets the chance,' he said. And if any such idea is in your mind, my dear fellow, I do conjure you to fight against it. It can only poison all your time, and it's bad enough at best. Take my advice,—put it all behind you and make a clean new sheet when the time comes."

I thanked him, but made no promise, and we shook hands and parted.

The advice, I knew, was good. But such a promise was not possible to me. For it was solely the intention to complete my work at the first possible moment that had nerved me so far to quiet endurance, and it would, I knew, continue to do so right to the end.

I was not a little upset to think that anyone—even one who prided himself on his skill in reading faces—should have fathomed my resolve so clearly. I could only hope that others were, and would be, more obtuse.

6.

IN both my prisons, and during the whole of my time, I was, I believe, looked upon as a model prisoner.

Such attainment is not difficult, if within you there is that which clamours for one thing only as necessary to its satisfaction ; and that,—freedom again at the first possible moment. And, since such early release can only be earned by the meticulous observance of every prison rule, he who would shorten his term studies those rules with care and observes them with most scrupulous exactness.

Everything was loathsome to me,—from the first enforced stripping for the convict bath and coarse bodily examination at Wormwood Scrubs, to the clanging behind me of the infernal gates at Princetown. Once duly settled there, I dropped into a mechanical routine of duties which to some extent acted as anodyne to my tortured soul.

Wormwood Scrubs is only the clearing-house for the great penal establishments elsewhere. While there you feel yourself only a bird-of-passage and never settle down. It is the most trying portion of the whole period of imprisonment.

There one serves one's term of solitary confinement, working all day in one's cell and never leaving it except for exercise and chapel. That terrible unbroken silence, in which one sits alone with the bitterness of the past and the blankness of the future and one's torturing thoughts, breaks many a man to pieces.

Then there are the discomforts and degradation of, and the inevitable bodily and mental revolt against, the coarse, ill-fitting clothing, the constant supervision, the menial services, the utter abnegation of self, and the feeling that one is no longer a man but a number, to be ordered and herded like a beast of the field, without even the possibility of voicing one's feelings which the beasts are allowed.

It was all horrible to me, but worst of all was that feeling of the lost self and the knowledge that it was nevermore to be recovered.

But I had laid my course for freedom at the earliest moment, and I held to it with inflexible determination.

And then—I had that within me which, while it darkened and twisted my soul, kept me to the straight and strait path of prison rectitude,—that smouldering volcano of hate and fell intent which I was determined nothing should quench. The fire was damped down for the time being by the necessity of observing the prison rules, but it glowed

hotter than ever below the placid surface. I strung myself to preserve an absolute imperturbability so that the time should be shortened by every second that the law allowed, but at times the cost and strain were heavy on me.

I have not one single word of complaint to make of my treatment in Dartmoor Prison. The Governor and his Deputy were in my time both army men and were eminently gentlemen. Beyond my first interview with them on arrival, I had practically nothing to do with either of them. The warders were strict,—and God knows it was necessary with some of us,—but not unduly so where the intention towards obedience was manifest.

There were many case-hardened sinners among us, and these were not by any means the worst behaved. Through long experience they knew the prison rules to the last letter, and just what they could and could not do without danger to their mounting tale of good-conduct marks. Like myself, they wanted freedom at the first possible moment and behaved accordingly.

To the chaplain I fear I was an unsolvable puzzle ; just as I was later on, on the lower bodily plane, to the medical officer. I listened attentively to all he had to say, lest refusal of his ministry should tell against me in the matter of marks, but my soul was cased in triple steel against his every effort.

He was a good fellow and did his utmost to pierce

my crust. Had he succeeded he would have been mightily astonished at what he found below.

So good a fellow was he, indeed, that at times I had a hard fight to get rid of the good he willed me and strove his best to instil into me. But in that I always succeeded, for to have failed would have been like losing my backbone. It would have left me helpless and nerveless and without a purpose in life.

Through the chaplain, after his first few talks with me, in which he learned some little about my previous life—very little, but enough for his immediate purpose—I was able to get practically all the books I wanted from the library, which was a great boon.

Still better, when a vacancy presently occurred among the librarian's assistants, through expiry of sentence, he got me appointed to the post and I retained it till I left. And for exercise I was given the care of one of the little gardens near the stone-breaking sheds, and I tended it to the very best of my powers and enjoyed doing it.

My work all round was light and eminently congenial, but, greatest gain of all, it removed me from that close association with my fellow-criminals which had been one of the hardest things of all to bear.

We were all criminals in the eyes of the law. But even the warders showed plainly that they could

perceive degrees in our criminality, not according to what we had done, but according to what we now were. And some among us were simply loathsome brutes, degraded and contaminating, filthy bundles of vile passions and viler thoughts, as morally infectious as a fever patient is bodily.

(My Dear Lady, I know, holds that every soul of them is redeemable. It may be so. I will hope it is so. I suppose it must be so, since God is love, and I have learned through her something of the magnificence of its meaning. But if she had heard some of them, as at times I was forced to do, her own pure and hopeful soul would have been sorely shocked and troubled, though I know it would have gone on hoping and praying for us all as before.)

My duties as assistant to the librarian, who was, of course, a warder in uniform, were—to keep the books clean and in good condition,—to repair damaged copies,—and to change the prisoners' books periodically. For this latter purpose there were provided big basket-trolleys on wheels, which we loaded up in the library and then made the rounds of the cells under strict supervision of a warder.

Materially then the chaplain was of great service to me, but spiritually not at all, because I would not. He did his best, but could make no headway against that triple armour of evil intention in which I had encased myself.

My choice was made. My soul was steeled inflexibly against any gracious outside influence. I lived from day to day, nay, from minute to minute, solely with the other end in view. And it was only that grim hope of completing my work in time that kept me up and enabled me to bear with equanimity the discomforts of prison-life.

All the ever-galling little incidentals to my position,—the perpetual restrictions,—the ubiquitous ‘Thou shalt nots,’—the trying supervision of the eyelet-hole in my cell door,—the knowledge that every movement was under observation,—the perpetual personal searchings,—‘rubbing-down’ was the term,—to see that we took no contraband to our cells,—the regular minute searching of our cells in our absence,—everything emphasised the forfeiture for the time being of our every right to call ourselves any longer men;—all these left me outwardly unruffled.

But many a night I have purposely lain awake breathing long deep breaths of the fresh moor air under the sliding panel of the window, for the mere joy of doing something of my own free will with none to say me nay. It was about the only thing one could do of one’s own intention. Every other act in our lives was subject to regulations.

Of a truth I was bound in misery and iron,—the phrase came to me in the course of my work,—misery of the mind and flesh, iron in my soul.

In a way I was content. Things might have been very much worse with me. My work was congenial. My food sufficed. I slept soundly of a night.

But my life was poisoned at the springs, for my Credo was hate. All that I suffered became to me but an aggravation of that man's offence. Every single item of it I put down to his account. I carried it forward day by day, swelling the total of his debt against the coming day of settlement, and fed my hatred of him by constant thought of it. The very fact of his being still alive was a tremendous item against him. If he had died, as he ought to have done, my sufferings would have been over.

I was perfectly alive to the evil state I was in. I nourished the ill thing within me by constant brooding over Honor's broken life and the full and final expiation I would exact for it.

My purpose never swerved. My only fear was the fear of death, and that was ever with me ;—the fear lest that other man should die before I was released,—the fear that I might die before I could kill him.

And at times the dread of either of these things coming to pass amounted to something like dementia. The man might be dead even now, and my chance gone. I should never hear of it. We knew nothing of what was going on in the outside world,—that was another of the hardships of prison-life.

The chill horror of the thought reduced me at times to a state of mental and physical collapse which puzzled the doctor exceedingly. At such times I was entirely subnormal, and life seemed slowly ebbing away without any ascertainable reason.

The doctor had a keen eye for malingerers and was at first inclined to look askance at my condition, seeing that he could make nothing of it. But as I made no complaint, asked for no favours, and resented the idea of going into hospital—lest it should lose me my position,—he came round and did his very best for me. He did everything in fact that a healer of the body could do for one whose soul was sick, and finally insisted on shelving me for a time. Which, however, would only have aggravated my condition if the librarian, who did not often get the services of so willing an assistant or one so well up in books, had not promised to keep my place open for me.

The two weeks I spent in hospital were the pleasantest experience I had in Dartmoor Jail. The full rest and the better feeding toned up my body somewhat and my spirits recovered themselves also.

I had a letter from my friend Denver as often as the rules permitted—in my first year, one every three months ;—in the second year, one every two months ; and in the third, one every month. He

never once missed and I was grateful to him. They were the only letters I received all the time I was there.

The good fellow even offered to come down and see me. But I preferred not. It was bad enough to feel like a convict in the hideous convict dress, without one's friends seeing one in it.

And I knew that his object in desiring to come was to learn for himself what frame of mind I was in,—and whether I was still harbouring vengeance against that doer of ill whose death at my hand was the sole reason for my living.

Denver could of course have solved all my doubts as to the man being still alive, but I did not dare to ask him.

One question I debated constantly in my mind and at absurd length. And that was this,—supposing I came out alive, and that other still lived, what means should I use next time to make a sure job of it and a certain end of him?

The revolver had failed me. Should I try the knife? The days and nights I spent turning this important matter over in my mind! And the enjoyment I savoured in the doing of it! It seemed to bring the actual accomplishment of my purpose nearer. I turned it over and over. I hugged it to me. I revelled in it like a hog in its mire or a miser in his gold.

The knife meant close quarters, and it might be

difficult to arrive at close quarters with a man who would fathom my intention the moment he set eyes on my face.

Then, in the bound volume of a magazine, I came upon an advertisement of the Browning automatic pistol which would deliver a very mitraille of shots without stopping, and that clinched the matter. My first purchase after my release would be a Browning automatic pistol.

That quiet, orderly, and most amazingly clean cell of mine,—Cell 251, 8 Ward, No. 5 Prison—was for many months the nightly scene of most arduous and bitter conflict.

The night-warder on his rounds, when he flicked open the spy-hole in the door, saw nothing but a convict sleeping quietly in his bed, and passed on, satisfied, to the next cell. But in the confined space of that bare, silent, white-washed cubicle, 9 feet in length, 7 in width, and 9 in height, there raged mighty battle, night after night, for months—ay, and for years,—the perpetual and universal conflict between good and ill to which all mankind is subject, of which his immortal soul is the object and prize.

I was perfectly cognisant of it ; indeed, so worked up was I at times that it seemed to me that I could catch with my straining ears the sweep and rustle of their wings as the black angels and the white wrestled and fought together in the dark above me.

For, you must know, that from the very first day I set foot in Princetown I was aware of some strange influence about me that warred continually with that on which my heart was set.

(My Dear Lady of the Moor says, and I have come to accept her word in all such matters, that man's natural state is good, his natural trend upwards, and that evil and backsliding are fallings away. And that word 'backsliding' would seem to prove her right, for one cannot slip backwards unless one has been endeavouring to climb. She holds that sin is largely soul-sickness, just as disease is a lapse from normal health.)

That very first day, as I trudged through the bare gray streets of Princetown to the grim front gate of the prison, I caught glimpses, between the cold little granite houses, of the great wide sweeps of the Moor beyond, and something within me answered to the call of it against my will.

They recalled very vividly to my mind, with something of damnatory reproach at my present estate, a huge steel engraving of the 'Plains of Heaven,' by one John Martin, which used to exercise my childish imagination as it hung on the wall of the dining-room of our home in Londonderry.

It was not simply that I was well content to be away at last from the lugubrious atmosphere of Wormwood Scrubbs, and within reach of the place that was to be my home for the next five years,—where I

could settle down and fall into a mechanical routine which would help the time to pass.

There was more in it than that. There was a graciousness and breadth and freedom about those swelling green ridges and rolling downs which called to the primal nature in a man and made for uplift, in spite of himself, and the degradation to which he might have brought himself,—and, as in my own case, deliberately designed himself.

Whether my fellows in misfortune felt it at all in the same way I cannot say. I saw the grizzled faces and saddened eyes turned towards the glimpses between the houses, and there was an obvious restive restlessness among us all. It might be simply the fact that this was the end of the journey, and this the last walk among the ordinary habitations of men for many years to come. But I think it not unlikely that to many besides myself the great Moor made its appeal and tendered its message.

Certain it is that, as I have said, I, in my perverse condition, found it necessary to fight constantly on behalf of the evil intention which was the very backbone of my life, the sole reason for my living, and the fight grew harder as time went on.

Always there was present with me—no matter how I stifled it and buried it deep under cairns of bitter remembrance,—the certainty that, just beyond the forbiddal of the terrible stone walls, lay something better,—something gracious and inviting,

if only I would cast aside my chosen evil and let my soul go forth to meet it.

Winter was a trying time for all of us, though less so for myself than for most. Those who had to go out into the keen winds and penetrating damp suffered much. On misty days, of which there were many, the outdoor gangs were kept inside for safety. The only attempts at escape were made when sudden mists overtook them before they could be hurried home. The sudden opportunity proved too much even for common sense at times. And while I was there, one man, who had only three months left to serve out of a ten years' term, found himself unable to resist the temptation and was shot while trying to bolt.

Spring, with its swirling rains and sweeps of brilliant white sunshine, quickened the blood even within the walls of Princetown Jail. The call of the Moor was strong upon me, and the need to fight it tooth and nail became ever the greater.

My cell faced due east, and of a morning, when the sun rose clear and unclouded, its stark whiteness would be flooded with silvery light, and the blank white door would be patterned on the inside with the black lines of the iron window-bars. And I would hump my back and my heart against it, for there was something of ironical taunt in the joyousness of the sunshine, while the black-barred door but emphasised the fact that I was a prisoner.

The sunset I could not see, of course. Never once during the whole of my five years there did I see the sun go down, and thereby missed more than I knew, for the sunsets on Dartmoor are wonders of uplifting glory beyond even that of the dawn.

The prison, however, lies on the eastern slope of a long green hill—Hessary, as I learned later,—and the sun went down behind it. But when, as was often the case, the zenith and the eastern sky were full of clouds, these would at times be set richly aglow from the fires of the west, and would wax brighter and brighter till suddenly the colours would fade, and the clouds became like smoke, and the shadows crept out and claimed the Moor for the night.

Summer and autumn dawns filled my cell with mellow gold, but still always flung the print of the bars before my waking eyes, and I hardened my soul against them all, and hugged my fell intent tighter to my heart than ever. Evil was my god, and good I would have none of.

But, all the same, as I now know, I was keenly conscious of the call of the Moor to better things.

It was in my third year that the conflict waxed fiercer than ever. My settled intention to end that man on the first opportunity never weakened, but the importunate cry from without grew steadily upon me and refused to be denied, and between them I was sorely torn and tried.

With the bitterness of death in my heart I yet found myself, morning after morning, standing on my wooden stool and gazing resentfully, with frowning face and pinched eyes, at the dark curtain of the eastern sky,—resentfully, and yet with an odd sense of expectation.

It was against the rules to stand on the stool and look out of window. I risked marks—which meant the shortening of my term—by doing it. But morning after morning found me there, and I grew so wary that I could always tell when a warder was coming, and I was never once caught.

And there I would stand watching, eagerly and against my will, for the ever-recurring miracle of the dawn,—the wonderful, gentle pulsing of the unborn day behind the veiling clouds,—the silent diffusion of sweet soft light, which thinned the veils and at last pierced them here and there with rosy tender fingers. Then came the herald-rays of greater strength shooting high up towards the single star that always remained as though to see the day properly in.

The great spread of the Moor before me lay always in a soft dim twilight,—except when the mists were out, when it looked like a vast sleeping lake.

The clouds up above would tinge with thin purple and begin to scatter and disappear; the distant ridges loomed large, the Moor lost its vague

immensity and began to show its natural features. And always I waited for the sudden uprising out of the lower darkness of one certain hill which lay exactly between me and the sun.

It was a regular triangle in shape, with flanks that stretched wide over the Moor, and it was crowned with huge piles of flat gray granite slabs. When at last the curtain-clouds parted, and the rim of the sun came stealing up silently above the dark blue distant ridges, it always seemed to me as though it was this special hill he had come to look for, and they two seemed to look across at one another and gravely pass their morning greetings.

The name of the hill I did not know and dared not ask. Convicts are not allowed the privilege of questioning their keepers,—least of all concerning the topography of their surroundings.

But there was more to me in the coming of each new day than the wonderful sight of it.

The majestic silence of the great transformation always had in it something of surprise for me. It has so still. Magnificent pæans of song would have been its rightful accompaniment.

But no sooner had the sun actually risen than I came by degrees to be aware of the Voice of the Moor, and it seemed to call to me—to me personally, and in a way that wrought strangely in me in spite of myself.

Looking and thinking back over it all, it is not

easy to explain what that call of the Moor was and how it affected me.

The sound that came to my bodily ears was, I suppose, compounded of all the awaking-to-life sounds of the things that lived out there in freedom. There was the lowing of distant cattle, and the bleating of sheep, and the strident neighings and whinnyings of the innumerable wild ponies and their foals. There was the carolling of larks and the songs and twitterings of all the other birds.

But there was more than all that. There was something in, and through, and above it all that called to my very soul to put the night behind me and come out into the morning light. And morning after morning I fought it down with all the ill-intent that was in me.

One day, in the winter, when I was repairing a Bible that had come to disjunction through much usage, certain words on one of the leaves I was carefully pasting in caught my eye and compelled me to read, by their appropriateness to my condition.

The eye of a soldier is caught at once by any stray word concerning military matters ; of a sailor, by any news from the sea ; of a banker, by anything on financial matters ;—and so, the quick eye of a convict-writer, accustomed to gather at a glance the meat and meaning of crowded paragraphs, could not fail to catch, on the pages he was carefully

pasting on to the binding slips, certain words that came right home to him.

—“ *From the heaven did the Lord behold the earth ; to hear the groaning of the prisoner ; to loose those that are appointed to death. . . .*”

I had not opened a Bible, except in the necessary course of my duties, for years. But now, as I pasted and inset the leaves, I glanced here and there about them. . . . “ *For my days are consumed like smoke. . . . My heart is smitten and withered as grass. . . . I have eaten ashes like bread. . . . My days are like a shadow that declineth. . . . He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer. . . .*”

My only prayer—and that never worded, but boiling hot in my heart—had been and was, that I and that other man might still be alive when my time was up.

On a further page I came upon,—“ *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron. . . . He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. . . .*”—and then on still another page,—“ *When he shall be judged, let him be condemned : and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few ; let another take his office . . . because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. . . .*”

He had us all there, the wonderful old writer.

“The broken in heart, slain by the evil man,”—Honor, my dear broken lily. . . . That evil man who had broken her, whose days were to be few. . . . I, the prisoner bound in affliction and iron, who was to be the instrument of righteous vengeance.

Now, of a morning, as I used to stand on my stool at my cell-window and stare expectantly at the eastern sky, waiting for the clouds to tremble apart and let in the new day, something of all this used to work within me,—the good and the evil.

And in that voice of the Moor that came up to me, morning and night, I recognised—against my will, and fought it desperately, since my very life and being depended, as it seemed to me, on the maintenance of my resolution,—I recognised, I say, a call to lay all this aside, to put the evil past behind me and come out into the light.

And I would not.

Truly it seemed to me at times that the varied voices of the Moor blended into one passionate yearning cry, as of a soul in very agony of pleading,—“O come! come! come! Put aside thy sin! Break the gates of brass, cut the bars of iron! Shake off the shackles of the past and come out into the light!”

And I would not.

By night, and especially when the full moon rose exactly behind my triangular hill again, that

importunate cry came louder than ever to my heart, though thinner in my ears.

When, as often happened, the Moor itself and all the lower lands and valleys were swathed in mist, the sight was a marvellous one. For then there lay below me, as far as the eye could reach, right to the farthest limit of the black sky, nothing but a vast placid silver sea on which the moonlight played mysteriously, and—rising proudly out of the midst of it—the dark topmost point of that shapely hill of which I have spoken, more impressive than ever in its lonely grandeur.

And along the face of the silver sea, that strange call to better things would come sweeping into my heart, with appeal and insistence so great that many a time I have only been able to resist them by flinging myself down on my pallet and wrapping the blankets tightly round my head.

Every night and every morning I cursed that call of the Moor right roundly. But night and morning found me at the window again, watching and waiting for that which I knew would come and which I hated and feared.

MY seven years—reduced by the exceptional good conduct I had so severely imposed on myself to five years and three months—came to an end at last.

How simply and easily those words are written ! But what days and nights—what hours and minutes and seconds of heart-breaking abjectness and soul-searching misery they represent, God alone knows.

However,—at last it was ended. I was taken up to London, where I had been condemned, and there released on probation. That is to say that for one year and nine months—the time needed for the completion of my sentence, and the remission of which I had gained by good conduct—I had to report myself once every month on my ticket-of-leave to the police-station nearest to wherever I might at the time be living.

But this meant not only a monthly misery and degradation,—a perpetual kissing of the rod and reminder of the broken shackles—but an insuperable bar to the recovery of my lost self, and the utter impossibility of shaking off the prison taint till those terrible one-and-twenty months should be completed.

In my own especial case, it may seem to you that this would make but little difference, since my sole aim in life was to complete my bungled work and make a final end of that other and myself.

But my very first enquiries after my release had been as to his whereabouts, and they were easily answered. He was abroad—in Japan, it was hinted—on some unknown, but supposed to be very delicate and important, mission connected with the military side of the compact between the two nations, and it might be many months before he returned to England.

Other rumours placed him in Russia, and still others in Egypt.

It was obviously out of the question to range the whole world after even so well-known a personage. So I had had to make up my mind to await his return, trusting to the justice of providence that Death would not jump my righteous claim on him.

My first call was on Denver, from whom I received both cheerful welcome back to life and a very acceptable account of his stewardship. By his skilful handling of my affairs during my imprisonment my income had risen to close on £700 a year. Not many ticket-of-leave men could step from prison to such comparative independence.

I also bought my Browning quick-firer; and I had a pleasant meeting with Johnstone, whom I

chanced upon in the street and received from him most unaffectedly cordial greeting. He insisted on our dining together at one of his pet places in Wardour Street, and afterwards we had a long and interesting talk.

He was too truly a man and a friend to attempt any avoidance of the past. He said bluffly : " Understand, Daunt, I for one have no unpleasant feeling towards you concerning what has happened, and I think you'd find it the same with us all, if you'd only come back among us. We all know there was something behind which you would not allow to come out, and we honour you for it. Come in among us again and you'll find yourself among friends."

I thanked him heartily for his good-feeling, but explained that I was first going abroad for a time. After that . . . we would see.

And three days later, having called at Scotland Yard and given proper notice of my intention of remaining out of England till my ticket-of-leave expired, I was once more in Paris.

I enquired there as to that good man whose high love for Honor had been to me all through my blackest time like a silver thread in a sackcloth robe. But he was dead, had died not many months after her, and had ordered his body to be laid in the same grave with her.

I went on at once into Switzerland, and then into Tyrol, and there I loitered about for eighteen

months, carrying with me everywhere my heavy burden, and finding it still ever necessary to grip it to me like grim death and to fight strenuously lest it should slip away and leave me void and purposeless and without an aim in life.

For to one who had lived for more than five hideous years bound in affliction and iron behind the lugubrious stone walls of Dartmoor Prison, the sight and proximity of the mighty white peaks soaring up into the heavenly blue held a call to better things that was almost irresistible,—a call that was akin to the call of the Moor,—akin to, but still not quite the same. Perhaps that was because the Moor, through long familiarity, had so wrought itself into my nature ;—and perhaps it was something more.

But the active evil will of a man can counteract all Nature's passive calls to good. He may suffer in the conflict till his own very nature be warped and twisted out of all semblance to humanity and he become no more than a beast of prey dressed in the habit of a man. For the Devil is very strong. It needs more than any passive call to good to turn him from the evil on which his heart is set.

I made no friendships ; though, on account, no doubt, of my loneliness and obviously troubled mind, many were tendered me.

My one resource during these trying months of enforced waiting was writing. That itch had always

been in me, but during those long years of bondage it had had to be suppressed. And that perhaps made it the more virulent when the embargo was removed.

While in prison it had of course been impossible for me to commit my thoughts to paper. It was, I suppose, not unnatural that they should endeavour to clothe themselves in the more rememberable form of verse. Many remarkable jingles I put together, laboriously enough and of little value. But it passed the time, and it kept my brain from rusting.

So now, as the result no doubt of all this, and of the grinding my soul had undergone, nothing would satisfy me but verse, and that of the most lugubrious description.

It came, however, hot and cold out of my heart, and, to my surprise, it seemed to get at other people's hearts also, and appealed to them in a way that I had never anticipated. In a time given over to the frivolous things of life my gloomy verses attracted attention, possibly by sheer force of contrast. And the name of Ian Carril, under which I fathered them, was actually becoming known, at all events to a select few, and, from the letters I received, was held by them in some estimation.

But, in view of what lay before me, I wished no friendships, and cared not at all for the making of casual acquaintance.

The nearest I came to even that slight touch with my fellows was with an old Romanist priest, whom I chanced upon in a pine wood above Davos, the day after I arrived there.

From his flowing white robe and long chains of beads I knew of course that he was a member of the order of S. Dominic, and my upbringing had given me a deep-rooted prejudice against his faith and all its practices. And so, in the natural course of things, I should have passed him by with no more than the ordinary casual courtesy that obtains between foreigners in a foreign land.

But there was something so arresting about this old gentleman that no one, I think, could have passed him like that when he obviously evinced a desire for a chat.

He was sitting on a pile of newly-cut pine logs. The ground all about was strewn with the white flakes of their undoing, and the branches and cones which had afterwards been stripped from them. The air was full of the sweet, pungent smell of them—the scent which is like balm to troubled lungs. Far away below, glimmering between the red boles of the standing pines, the white buildings of Davos shone in the afternoon sun.

He looked up at me as I entered the clearing, and his quiet penetrating gaze had in it nothing of undue curiosity, rather something of wistful entreaty.

It was an unusually beautiful old face, the soft fine texture of the skin enmeshed with tiny lines which spoke eloquently of life-long endurance,—possibly of bodily suffering,—certainly of other people's sins. His mouth was sweetly firm, as though accustomed to the administration of gentle rebuke. And his eyes, deep-set under pent-house brows, were very bright and penetrating, and yet in some way unusually attractive and persuasive. He was small of stature, and spare and frail-looking.

Constrained by these things, and by a gentle movement he made, as though to offer me room on his log, I sat down beside him without further invitation. And I remember clearly every word he said to me.

“You are but newly arrived, I think,” he said, in a gentle sympathetic voice.

“Yes, I only came yesterday.”

“Ah. And may I express the hope that you are here of choice, not of necessity.”

“Purely of choice.”

“You are one of the fortunate ones. I have been here many months. It is not likely that I shall ever go away again. At eventide, however, there is light. And I am well content. I have had a busy life. Rest will be very welcome to me.”

“One must not give up hope. When that goes there is not much left to live for.”

“My highest hopes and wishes have long been

over there," he said, with a friendly little upward jerk of the head. "It will be greatest joy to me to go. And you?"

"I have still work to do here."

"Good work, I trust, my son. It is good to have good work to do,—nothing better."

I did not answer him for a time. Some strange sudden impulse took possession of me to confide in the benevolent wisdom of this saintly old man.

I had nursed my devil in secret for so long that he might have grown distorted. It would be a relief—ay, untellable relief—to haul him out and see how he struck an unbiassed stranger—if one could do so without risk.

"You are a priest of the Roman Church," I began boldly.

"A very humble follower of the true Church, my son," and the gentle, wise old face turned full upon me like the tender glow of a shaded lamp,—a lamp that I could not doubt had lighted many faltering feet upon the road, even if it was a road that had never commended itself to me.

"I am not of your fold. But if you will hear me under the seal of confession I would speak with you."

"Speak on, my son. I have heard under that seal worse things than any you are likely to tell me."

Very briefly, and without any names, I outlined my story, and explained my intentions. He heard it all in silence, the beautiful old head and lined face bent sympathetically towards me.

"I recognise fully," I concluded, "that what I am resolved to do is against all the laws of God and man. But . . . well, there it is. I must do it, and I intend to do it. Man's judgment will be severe. God's may, I trust, be mingled with mercy."

"Always, my son, always!" he interjected.

"The man, you see, is a wretch. He deserves to die. The earth will be the cleaner for his removal, and it may be the saving of many whom he might bring to ruin if he is allowed to live."

"You may safely leave him to God, my son."

"Meanwhile he is a curse to the world. . . . I know all you would say, father,"—as he laid a thin, waxen, but very shapely hand on my knee. "All the time I was in Dartmoor Prison——"

"Ah,—you were in Dartmoor!"—with a kindling of the eye.

"I was in prison for five years and three months . . . five hideous years . . . and three months which seemed as long as all the years that had gone."

"I know, my son. I know. . . . Had you been of our faith, perchance . . ." he said wistfully.

"It would have made no difference. Our own good man did his best, and I had to hold him at arm's length all the time lest he should prevail.

You see, I lived through it all for this one thing alone. If I had not had that hope in me I do not think I could have borne it. . . . Oh, it has not been easy, I can assure you. There was something there, I don't know what, which fought hard all the time to take me from my purpose. I think it was the sight of the wide free Moor outside. I could see it from the window of my cell, and it called and called perpetually to me to give up my own will in the matter. . . .”

“God bless her!” he said fervently, and I turned and looked at him in great surprise.

There was a thin flush of colour on the white cheek, and a radiant little glad star in the gentle eyes that searched me through and through.

“God bless her!” he said again, and seemed to enjoy the saying of it; and I stared back at him in amazement, and wondered if he might possibly be not quite right in his mind.

“God bless whom?” I asked brusquely.

“I will tell you, my son,” he said, in quite a joyous voice. “Oh, it is good to hear, this that you tell me. . . . Listen!”—with the gentle constraining hand on my knee again. “Out there, on the confines of the Moor, we have a daughter in Christ—very dear to me, and to very many others—to all souls in trouble. A sweet and gracious woman, given to prayer, and eager to help and to save. The Prison is one of her special objects of petition. She

craves the redemption of those poor troubled souls with a fervour that finds at times its reward. It was undoubtedly against her prayers you were fighting."

"It may have been. But I do not thank her. She has given me many a trying hour and much strife of mind."

"God bless her!" he said once more. "Will you take the advice of an old man who may pass at any moment, my son?"

"Not if it means giving up all I have lived for through all these years."

"I do not ask that,"—and his emphasis of the first word showed me what his request would be. "What I would beg of you is this.—Go back to the Moor——"

"I was going in any case, as soon as my term of probation expires. I want to see the cursed place from the outside and exult over it as a free man."

"I understand," he nodded. "Well, when you are there, seek out this dear daughter of the Church, I beg of you, put your hands in hers, and tell her your story."

"I will not," I said roughly. "I will suffer no interference in this matter."

He was a very wise old man. He took not the slightest notice of my brusqueries, but went on in his quiet earnest way.

“I will write down her name for you in case you should think better of it. And even if you tear this up,”—which his extraordinary acumen perceived to be my intention,—“you will still never forget it. It is not only a beautiful name, but one of historic memory and significance,”—and in his voice as he pronounced it there was the savour of joyousness. “She is the direct descendant of her who first bore that name and only by God’s mercy escaped the fate of her predecessors.”

He traced the name delicately on the back of a card with the stub of a black-lead pencil and handed it to me. His own name, engraved on the card, was Shields,—the Very Rev. Dominic H. Shields, O.P.

I did not destroy the card, as I had intended to do. It is here before me on the table as I write. I kept it to remind me of the fine old face and striking personality of the man, and it has served its purpose.

The gentle wistful look with which he handed it to me would have prevented me destroying it at once in any case. I could no more have done that than I could have struck him in the face. Indeed, I knew he would have felt the blow the less of the two, and so, as he rose, stiffly and crampedly, from the log, I placed the card in my pocket-book and rose also.

“The sun is setting and I must get indoors,” he said. “If you are going down we might go

together, and in the steep places you shall give me your arm."

Which I did, with a novel sensation of making instead of marring. And I was glad that I had done so, for I never saw him again.

When I made enquiries at his Pension, I was told that he was too ill to receive visitors, and that was still his condition when I left.

8.

MY probationary term expired at last, and I was free to return to England with none to question or say me nay.

After a couple of necessary days in London I set off at once for Dartmoor, going by way of Moreton Hampstead to Postbridge, which lies right in the heart of the Moor and within walking distance of the Prison. Princetown itself, of course, I could not go to, not had I any desire that way.

It was a wonderful wild day of light and shade as I drove over the open moorland by Bush Down, walking with the driver alongside the carriage up the endless steep hills, till we came at last to the topmost point by the little wayside Warren Inn, and so, cautiously and with grinding brakes that thrilled one's spine to the marrow, down the steep descent of Merripit Hill to the noisy shelter of the trees at Postbridge.

As we came down the long white ribbon of a road, which wound on and on as far as the eye could reach, my driver punctiliously pointed out the gleaming roofs and houses of Princetown, perched up aloft under the brow of Hessary.

“ Yon’s the big pris’n,” he said proprietorially.—
“ Dartmoor Prison at Princetown. Twelve hundred of the worst they keep safe and tight in there, ’cept when one makes a bolt when the mists are out. And yon’s Bellever ! ”—and I recognised the gracious triangular hill which for years had called to me from the window of my cell.

Bellever ! That was the first time I had heard its name.

The sky was deep blue, banked round the horizon with piles of snow-white cloud, while, overhead, wisps of darker cloud sped before the wind and dappled hills and moors with madly galloping shadows which the chasing sunshine allowed not a moment’s rest.

The keen sweet rush of the wind had in it cleansing and bracing beyond anything I had experienced since I left the prison. There was in it the very breath and essence of freedom. Perhaps that came from the feeling that that same wind, which I had sniffed so often behind the prison-walls, but always and inevitably tinctured with the prison-taint, blew now upon me a free man ; as free to come and go as it itself.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and no man knoweth whence it cometh or whither it goeth. How often behind my bars I had longed for the freedom of the wind, and now at last I had come to it and it to me.

At the little hotel they gave me the end rooms nearest the bridge,—a sitting-room with a porch opening right on to the road, and a bedroom above reached by a narrow staircase out of the room itself. It was like a little house all to myself, and nothing could have been more to my mind.

After tea I walked down the road, with the wind in the tormented trees above me making a noise like the sea on a shingly shore, and stood for a while on the bridge looking down into the swift amber rush of the Dart, as it sped among its gray boulders and under the great clapper-bridge towards the freedom of the sea. There were larks bursting up above with joyous songs of freedom. A troop of wild Dartmoor ponies with their tiny stilt-legged foals came careering down the road, with some boys and dogs vainly endeavouring to head them off. But the ponies had the pace of the boys, while as for the dogs they simply lowered their shaggy heads and made for them whenever they came too close, whereat the dogs tucked in their tails and ran. And I rejoiced in the wild freedom of it all, and in my long-anticipated share in it.

I walked on and on to get another exultant glimpse of the Prison. On the shadowy moor on my right large birds were calling and hovering. I took them to be hawks. And there was the bleating of lambs and the deep responses of mother-sheep. A rabbit scurried across the white road and

disappeared through a hole in the roughly-piled granite side-wall. A long-legged man, on a pony altogether disproportioned to his size, galloped past me with a cheery "Good even'n !"

I walked on and on in the failing light—the west all smouldering like a dying fire, the broken flying clouds up above tinged with purple—till I came to a bridge, and saw on my left the great rock-crowned triangle of Bellever, and away under the dark purple-blue ridge of Hessary the lights of Princetown, like a string of shining gold beads on a cushion of velvet.

I stood long looking at these two points that had meant so much in my life,—thinking back over it all,—the weary days and wearier nights behind the bars : the call of the Moor to my soul, which had somehow seemed to centre in that great green rock-crowned hill : all I had suffered, and why. And I exulted again in the freedom which brought the purpose of my life within reach of accomplishment. All I had to do now was to wait till that man came back from his mission. Then, in the full of his satisfaction, I would end him.

Freedom for me meant only licence for the accomplishment of my righteous vengeance and the cleansing off the earth of an evil-doer.

(And so, as I have since been taught by My Lady, this which I looked upon as freedom was in very truth but a bondage worse than that of Princetown Jail itself,—a caging of the soul, in fetters of iron

and gates of brass, compared with which all the bolts and bars of man's imposing were no more than the filmy threads of the hedge-spider.)

I sat on the mossy stones of the bridge, brooding on the past and the future, till the fires in the west burnt themselves out, leaving but a bank of gray ashes, while the amber water below me lost its last shimmer from the clouds above and became no more than a murmurous voice in the darkness.

Then I groped my way back along the dim white road, in a silence more profound than I had ever known, and met not a single soul till the lights of Postbridge twinkled welcomingly through the trees.

Yes,—this was freedom at last ;—freedom to feel myself once more a man ;—freedom to rid the earth of him who had poisoned all my life—past, present, and to come.

I WAS early afoot next day, and carrying some eatables I had asked them to put up for me, I set off at once for Bellever.

I had learned the best way from the girl who waited on me at the inn, and so turned in by the quarry, climbed the bank at the side, and struck a path that led straight up to the swelling breast of the Moor.

It was again a mixed day of low-sailing clouds with occasional floods of sunshine, and the tints and tones of the distant hills and ridges rooted me to long gazing at times and stirred my brooding soul beyond its wont.

The hill-side shadows were the deep, tender, purple-blue of uncut amethyst, with now and again glimpses between of distant country basking in sunlight and gleaming like bits of opal and aquamarine. The wind was strong and sweet and bracing and sang through me of the new free life. Had I not been a man accursed, and given body and soul to anything less than the execution of a righteous vengeance, I must have been uplifted by it all. But I carried within myself the poison that admitted no antidote.

As I climbed I caught sight of the bold rock crown of Bellever in front. The sun shone full upon him for a moment and he gleamed like the gold boss of a mighty green upturned shield. The heather through which I was walking had been burnt in places and the ground was thick with the blackened stalks which crackled crisply under my feet. A new strong growth of vivid green grass was already covering up the scars of the past and proclaiming a more hopeful and useful future. Wherein lay a parable for myself if I had had the heart and eyes to see it. But these as yet were tightly shut. It needed the touch of a gracious spirit to open them, and that time had not yet come.

Here and there gray rocks pushed up through the earth, and there were unexpected holes and swampy places which the girl had told me specially to avoid. It was necessary to look carefully to one's going to avoid pitfalls, and when I halted for another look at Bellever he had disappeared, and all I could see was the bold sweep of the Moor running right up into the sky.

I kept as straight a course as I could and pushed on, and the next time I stood he was there again. And the next time he was gone and the Moor was empty. And that strange elusiveness is Bellever, as all who know him will testify.

But, in spite of his tricky ways, I found myself at last climbing, with a feeling of accomplishment,

his actual green flank. I passed through the chaos of scattered gray boulders which compose his outer guard, and stood at last in the green way between the rough rock-towers, and then climbed up to the top of the high-piled slabs which form his western summit.

And so my prison dream of lying there a free man came true.

It was that first day of real full freedom on Bellever that set me to jotting down some of the thoughts and feelings aroused in me by this new phase of my life.

And as my time is very short, I will husband it by tearing out and inserting in places the notes I made in my pocket-book from time to time. They will, at all events, have the merit of being written on the spot, as it were, though when I wrote them I had no slightest idea of using them in any such fashion. I insert here what I wrote on Bellever that very first day.

As I write I am sitting on that green triangular hill with the great slabs of rock on top, which I used to gaze at from my prison window, and longed and longed, with a desire which became an absolute aching pain, to be free to climb, and there to lie just for once, savouring the full freedom of life before setting out on my final pursuit of death.

It is called Bellever, and the name rings well in my ears. For, ever and again, during my last years

in the prison especially, I was conscious of some new outside influence on my thoughts and my life ;—something which in some strange way seemed to make it more and more difficult for me to stick to the only purpose for which I lived ;—something which called and called without ceasing to something else inside me to come out and shake off the shackles of the past, to leave it all behind, and begin again—a free new man, a new free life.

More than once, even before this new feeling came upon me, I had been surprised and angered at finding my craving for vengeance on that other failing somewhat in its intensity. When such weak moods overtook me I would take myself to task, and curse myself for a coward and a poltroon, and by degrees force myself back to the necessary dourness of implacability.

But I was conscious all along of the oddness of this necessity to screw myself down, as it were, to what I knew perfectly well was as evil a thing as life could produce.

I had always believed that man tended to evil as sparks fly upward, and that good was the hard-won prize of perpetual struggle against the natural proclivity to sin.

But in my case it was just the opposite. I found it necessary to strive constantly against the inclination towards good,—or at all events against an inclination to let the dead past bury its dead, and

not to disturb its dishonoured bones. And this caused me grievous distress of mind, and set me fearing that such slackening of resolution could only come from weakening of the brain and will.

It also set me wondering at times whether good rather than evil might not possibly be, after all, the natural state of man, and that therefore evil was a lapse from moral health just as sickness is in the body. (And this I found later on to be My Dear Lady's very assured belief.)

And always,—I suppose from the fact that this green rock-crowned Bellever was ever before me, the principal object in that wide outside freedom for which my soul craved more than for any mortal thing—though it craved it solely for the accomplishment of an evil purpose,—always, Bellever, though I did not then know its name, represented to me my first stepping-stone to the desire of my life.

If once I could set foot on Bellever as a free man the rest would follow.

(So it seemed to me. But—as I have probably said, though time is so short with me that I cannot search back through what I have written to verify it—Bellever became by degrees very much more than that to me. And that is why its name, when at last I learned it, rang so pleasantly in my ears.

It came, in some strange way, to represent in itself the call to freedom and a new and better life.

And, though I resented the call and strove against it, none of the resentment attached to the green hill itself. That, somehow, stood always in my mind for freedom and the wider and higher life.

Bell-ever ! Bell-ever ! Yes, the name rings—and henceforth ever will ring, in my ears as, I suppose, a sanctuary bell rings in the ears and hearts of those in the habit of worshipping there. And presently you will see why.)

As I sit in the lee of a pile of the great gray rock-shelves, those other grim gray buildings of Princetown are right over against me under the long rounded hill, Hessary, which always shut us off from the sunsets.

A moment ago, the sunshine, chasing the shadows swiftly along the green ridge, came full on the Prison and rested there, for the cheer and uplift of the wounded souls within,—or, may be, in surprise at the dolorous sight of them.

With my glass I have been able to pick out the window of my cell. It is in Ward 8, the thirty-fourth window from the north end of Prison 5. And to sit looking at it from the outside, a free man on this green hill of freedom, at which I had gazed so often and so longingly from behind the bars, fills me with a storm of strangely mingled feelings.—Something of gratitude that that most dismal living death is over and can never be mine again. For next time

I shall most assuredly accomplish his death and my own.—More perhaps of exultation that I have lived through that life of death that I may kill him, and that he has lived to be killed by me. For either of us to have died in the meantime would surely have been grotesquest irony of Fate.—And, withal, something of that curious importunate sense of a power, either within or without me, which would have me cast it all aside and start life afresh, leaving that other, as that good old priest advised, to the God whom he outrages by still living.

I can see the prisoners working in the fields, like tawny gray ants ; and the blacker ants pacing watchfully aloof from them are the armed warders in charge. The black buildings to the left are the warders' houses, where those big burly representatives of law and order live, and have wives and families like lesser men within the law.

How punctilious we were to keep on the right side of them ! How eager to give no slightest cause of offence lest a single mark should be lost !

If one came suddenly on me as I lie here, I fear the habitude of those five years of discipline would spring me to my feet at attention and give me away, though I know full well that I am beyond his power and he could not lay a finger upon me.

After that first visit I spent much of my time on Bellever. One or two of the other regular sights of

the neighbourhood I went to—Grimspound, The Gray Wethers, Wistman's Wood, which, however, was too near Princetown to please me, and down the Dart. But none of these held for me any attraction comparable with that of Bellever, and my feet got into the way of turning in at the quarry, and climbing the track across the Moor, as naturally as flowers turn to the sun.

I spent most of my time there, whole days from earliest dawn to sunset, content to lie and watch the ever-changing aspects of the Moor, and to exult over the grim prison, crouched on the slope of the green hill opposite. At times it seemed to me like a veritable beast of prey, settling itself for a fresh spring at me, which would be the last. Though when that time came it would not, I knew, actually be in Dartmoor that the end would come. And I was glad of that. Still, that snake-like coil of buildings under Hessary represented to me the final might of the law I was about to outrage and defy, and I hated it and the sight of it.

Those first long quiet days among the gray granite slabs were the happiest of my life. Possibly also they were given to me intentionally as a preparation for what was to come.

The wonder and ever-changing beauty of the Moor grew upon me more and more. It was enthralling, obsessing.

It was never twice the same, rarely indeed for

many minutes at a time. And to a man accustomed to five years of deadly-monotonous routine,—where every duty had to be done to the minute and just so,—it was that constant change, and the untrammelled freedom of which it was born, that fascinated my very soul.

Those flying clouds and sweeping sunbursts were subject to no controls or times. The wild things of these vast spaces, the ponies, the sheep, the birds, they all roamed large and free. And I, a free man, lay and watched and delighted in their freedom and my own.

No wonder Bellever rings magically in my ears, and ever will do for the short span of life that may be left me. It will not be long. When the still greater freedom comes, may it still be given to me to return to Bellever. If my body could lie below one of those great gray slabs. . . . But that will not be possible. My bones will dissolve in the quicklime of the prison-yard. Only in the spirit shall I ever see Bellever again, and I care not how soon that may be.

But, greatly as I enjoyed it all, Bellever was still a place of bitter conflict for me.

Day after day that same grim fight went on, within me and without,—the evil that had become a very part of my soul fighting doggedly against all that Bellever unconsciously stood for in my life.

And I would lie stolidly watching the fight, in a

strangely raised, aloof fashion that must have bordered on madness at times.

The sweet clean rush of the wind thrust at me like the Spirit of God charged with cleansing and new life.

(My Dear Lady once said to me that, to her, the free ubiquitous air, which is everywhere at once and without which man cannot live, is like unto God Himself and to some extent typifies Him to her.)

And I felt its uplift, but pinched my face against it, and blew my smoke at it, and hugged my evil resolve the more closely.

When the vast white masses of summer cloud floated serenely in the deep upper blue, and now and again—very often, in fact—grim flights of darker cloud would come sweeping in over the hills and charge at them till the whole sky was a-boil with the hurrying turmoil of the conflict, it seemed to me that there was my fight transferred to the heavens. The white clouds were my good angels, and the dark ones my bad, and I lay there like a spectator at a show, and watched them fight it out. I could see the sweep and whirl of the mighty wings, could feel and hear the rush of them ; and when at times the lightning ripped through and played viciously among my stones, and the thunder bellowed along the valleys and clapped among the distant tors, I exulted in it, in the vicious flashes and the evil roar, which chimed so well with that which was in me.

Then the storm would sweep away to the east, trailing its filmy skirts in tatters over the ridges, and the sun would break through again, and over the distant valley under Hamildown a rainbow arch would linger as though loth to go.

And yet,—I know it now—and indeed I was at times dimly conscious of it then, though I would not admit it even to my inmost thought—Believer and the Moor were working mightily in me for good. The quiet uplift and graciousness of it all wrought upon me in a way and with a power on which I had not counted.

I fought against these better tendencies with every ounce of evil that was in me, and the struggle at times waxed exceedingly bitter, and left me angry and exhausted.

I chafed at the bit, called myself coward and poltroon, raked up all the past and tortured myself with it, and hugged my evil resolve to my heart as a happier man might hug his first-born.

At such times I would pace the grassy way between the great twin rock-towers for hours at a time, as though by the wearing out of the body the unquiet spirits within might also be laid to rest. And often I would climb the rough gray towers themselves and stand there gazing out over the Moor, as a beleaguered soul in extremity might watch for the coming of outside help.

Very rarely did I go home till the gathering mists

and shadows warned me of the dangers of crossing the Moor in the dark.

I would lie and watch the distant hills turn from green and amber-brown to blue—dark blue—purple—amethyst, and the sky to deep unfathomable blue, paling towards the horizon all round to a clear pale cerulean that by contrast was almost white,—except in the west, over Princetown and Hessary and Longaford, where the amber ashes of the sunset still burned. And down below and all around me the rolling ridges and valleys of the Moor were all smoothed out by the shadows and the mists.

One such evening, after a day of unusual conflict, I fell asleep as I lay watching. And when I woke, soaked with the heavy dew, the moon was up, and I was prisoner on a rocky islet in a silver sea.

It was a wonderful sight. The night-mist lay thick and unbroken as far as I could see, except for the rounded top of Laughter Tor, which showed like another islet close at hand, and the moonlight gleamed on the ruffled white surface of the mist and turned it into a sea of frosted silver.

The ghostly shadows of Bellever's rocks were black as ink, and the great gray piles themselves glimmered weird and uncanny in the strange light. The silence was overpowering, almost overwhelming. The cry of a sheep or a cow or a pony would have been a relief and a reassurance of life. I felt as

though, for my sins, I had died and come to life again in a new dead silent world.

But there was nothing of fear or discomfort in the feeling. Rather, a sense of peace, of unutterable thankfulness that the struggle was ended at last.

Then, at last, as I tramped the grassy gangway between the rock-towers, unable to get away till I could see where I was going, I saw the curtains of the eastern sky flutter, as I had so often seen them from the window of my cell. The rosy fingers reached up tremulously as though feeling for the opening in the curtains; the sky pulsed with tender colours right up to the zenith; the sun peeped over the distant ridge; the curtains opened wide; and in that strange majestic silence which was ever astonishing to me the new day came gloriously through. And I stumbled down through the crackling heather-stalks of the Tor's wide flank to breakfast.

But Bellever had endless surprises for me, and one of them gave me a nasty jar. (I insert another page from my note-book written the day after it occurred and while it was all still fresh in my mind.)

—I was lying on Bellever yesterday afternoon, fighting the same old wearisome battle,—or, say, stubbornly rejecting the good that the gracious influences of the Moor urged upon me. It was a gray windy day, and suddenly, to my surprise at the

speed of it, a dense white mist came rolling down over Hessary, evidently on the wings of a gale.

The Prison was blotted out in an instant. One moment it was there and the next it was gone. And, before I had any chance of getting down to safety, the wall of mist came sweeping along, swallowing up everything as it came, and bottling me up there as securely as the great stone walls had done in Princetown.

While I was still staring at the amazing speed of its advance there came along it the dull report of guns, and I knew only too well what that meant.

Some poor devil, along there in the prison fields, had seen his opportunity and had made a bolt for freedom—and by this time was probably lying bleeding in the wet grass, with the panting warders gathered round and looking down at him as the hunter looks down at his quarry.

When a mist comes over the Moor there is only one thing to be done—unless you are a convict—and that is to sit down wherever you happen to be and wait till it passes. For not only is the coiling veil absolutely bewildering to the senses, so that one might wander in ineffectual circles for hours or even days, but the Moor itself is full of pitfalls, easily avoidable with sight, but actively dangerous to the unseeing;—hidden holes and outcropping rocks which make for broken legs,—and swampy mires into which a man might fall and never be seen again.

All this I had been urgently warned against, and so, as the gale which brought the mist swept clammy round the great rocks of the Tor, I found a sheltered niche to leeward and squeezed as far into it as I could get. And there, with the collar of my coat turned up and my cap drawn down to my eyes, I lit a pipe, and pondered the discomfoting possibility of having to stop there all night.

All night ?—from all I had heard I might consider myself in luck if it ran to no more than that, for they had told me of fogs lasting for days.

Sodden with the mist, which whirled past the opening of my crevice like the writhing folds of ghostly garments, and penetrated also through some hole at the back, I pictured to myself the possibility of the next party of sightseers coming suddenly on my dead body, and rather enjoyed the thought of their discomfort. After all, it would be small compared with what my own would have been, though by that time all would be well with me.

Then I determined that if the mist continued in the morning I would make a desperate effort to get down, on my hands and knees if necessary and with infinite precaution, to the high road which crosses Cherry Brook not a mile and a half from Bellever. Surely, starting from the south side of the Tor and groping always downwards I should in time strike either the brook or the road. In any case I would not stay up there to starve, though I had an idea

it took a good many days for a man actually to starve to death.

I was still gloomily cogitating these matters when I was startled by a sound that was not the buzzing of the fog-wind past the opening of my crevice.

Voices,—subdued and hoarse with the fog, gaspings and pantings of men in the last extremity of distressful going,—and I saw two dim figures creep past like denser clots of mist and knew instinctively what they were.

“Hell! but it’s cold,” muttered one, muffling his mouth with his jacket as he stopped to cough up the fog from his overcharged lungs.

“Perishin’,” growled the other, and they propped themselves against the rock whose cleavage formed my crevice, breathing as though through sponges, in a way that was distressing even to listen to.

“Which way now?”

“Darned if I know. It’s all alike in this — fog.”

“’Bout done, I am. That bog nigh ended me.”

“Same here. But we’ve got to go on. May’s well have a run for our money now.”

“’Tain’t worf it.”

“You’re right. But chance come an’——”

I was quite aware of the danger I was in. Escaping convicts as a rule have no desire to add more to their record than is absolutely necessary.

They want clothes and they want money, and

these they will take wherever they can lay hands on them. If they discovered me there, alone and unarmed, my clothes and my money they would certainly take, and the results to me personally could not be pleasant,—might indeed be much more than unpleasant.

At any moment they might become aware of me.

Necessity sharpened my wits. I had a fellow-feeling for them. I was sorry to harry them. But it was two against one, and in a stand-up fight my chances would have been small.

I took what seemed to me the only course. And in any case it only hastened their departure by a minute or two.

Making all the noise I could I advanced boldly out of my nook, crying, “Here they are, boys! Look out there!”—and with jerking oaths the two disappeared down the mist-wreathed slope of the Tor. I heard their scuffling feet as they stumbled and floundered over the thickly-strewn boulders, and they were gone.

Satisfied that nothing further was to be apprehended from the convicts, I was stepping back into my nook, for the mist-laden wind was discomforting, when once again I heard the sounds of approach on the side of the Tor opposite to that down which the others had fled,—heavy stumbling feet coming as swiftly as the evil circumstances permitted, and panting voices.

“Heavens !” thought I. “Has the whole prison broken loose ?”

But as the voices drew nearer I recognised them as of quite a different calibre. More,—as I listened intently I recognised one voice and was able to allot it to its rightful owner. It was the voice of James Haltrop, one of the warders in Prison 5. I knew him well.

“Could have sworn I heard a shout,” he panted, and I heard the strap-ring of his rifle rattle as he shifted it to the other shoulder.

“Sheep may be,” said his companion. “Not our men, anyway. They’re not given to shouting.”

I hugged the furthest inside corner of my hiding-place. There was no danger here, but I had no desire to renew the acquaintance of Haltrop or any of his fellows. And it would have been repugnant to me to give away the evaders.

They poked about among the rocks for a minute or two, and climbed up on top, and then I heard them no more. But I stood all night in my nook lest they should be lying low somewhere about the Tor, and a longer night I never endured.

The mist still hung thick in the morning. But I was starved and cramped, and as soon as I could see the ground below my feet I set off cautiously for the high road or Cherry Brook, and in time, weary and bemired, I came upon the latter and

followed it up till I reached the road, and so got back to Postbridge.

That spell of fog lasted three whole days, and the next two of them I spent in bed—not much the worse for my adventure, but very tired and enjoying the novel rest.

Rest of body indeed, and I needed it. But, most of the time, my soul was in a tumult and my thoughts whirling madly.

All the old fierce conflict raged round me and in me more bitterly than ever.

Possibly it was that coming suddenly face to face with the prison taint again that stirred me so. I grew sick with the stress of it.

What madness it was, to think of falling again into that awful pit—and worse. Here I was, purged by the law—a free man. And of my own free will I was going to plunge into it once more, and this time beyond any possibility of redemption! Sheer madness!

But—urged my demon—for this alone you have lived and suffered. Will you, like a coward, turn back now? The man still lives. The wrong is not atoned, and nothing but his blood can atone it. Besides, you will be serving your kind by destroying his power for further ill.

Leave him to God!

Seek him out and slay him!

To do some active good in the world is serving your kind better than the slaying of one evil man.

This is simple cowardice, born maybe of overstrain. For seven years you have lived for this sole thing. If you are a man, carry it through! Cleanse the record with his blood! Make an end!

So, they fought for my soul—my dæmons and my demons, the good angels and the bad. And I was the battle-ground and suffered as battle-grounds must.

I was torn with the conflict. More than once I considered—as deliberately as was possible to me—the still greater cowardice of evading both issues and ending the struggle by making an end of myself. The final peace of death presented itself to me as the most desirable thing I could attain.

But physically I experienced no ill-effects. My stay in Dartmoor Prison, though I had not been exposed to the rigours of the outdoor men, had yet hardened me beyond the reach of ordinary colds, and as soon as the hunger and cramping pains were gone I was, to that extent, all right again,—only in mind and soul troubled past the bearing.

(My Dear Lady of the Moor says emphatically that nothing happens without good reason, and that even the things which seem not good to us at the time still turn to good. And undoubtedly it was so in this case.)

WHILE I lay in bed resting, that second day, Hepsy, the maid, in the kindness of her heart brought me up from one of the other sitting-rooms an armful of books to help the time pass. And thereby, all unconsciously, saved a sinful soul from the destruction towards which it was set.

(I have good reason now to hope, indeed, that two sinful souls may go to her credit in the Great Books up above.)

I turned over her assortment without much interest. There was Baring-Gould's 'Dartmoor.' I read all he had to say about Bellever. There was Burnard's 'Dartmoor Pictorial Records' in four volumes. I looked at the plates and read all he had to say about Bellever. And there were several of Eden Phillpotts' novels, all about the Moor.

And then I came on a book by a lady writer of whom I had never heard. The cover attracted me by its presentation of a Tor which seemed to me like Bellever.

The title also suggested Bellever. (See note below.) And though, for the moment, I had had

(*Note by the Editor.*—Daunt in his MS. of course gives the title of the book and the author's name. But these My Lady struck out, and when I asked her why, she simply said, "We do not need any such advertisement.")

quite enough of Bellever, it had so wrought itself into my heart and mind that I opened the book and read.

I read on and on, drawn irresistibly by something which I could not put into words, but which charmed and fascinated me. I read the book through, and then read it again more slowly and thoughtfully, savouring every word with enjoyment.

There was in it for me, as I have said, a curious charm and fascination. It was not a novel in the ordinary sense. There was little or no plot. It told simply of the Moor and the Moor-folk, human and otherwise, their joys and sorrows, their comedies and tragedies, but with such insight and sympathy that I read on and on with sheerest delight, and found myself unconsciously formulating in my mind a very distinct impression of the writer herself. And it was that, I know now, which charmed me so.

Hitherto no woman, except my sister Honor, had come into my life to any extent worth speaking of.

(I have little doubt that had it been otherwise things might have gone differently with me. And yet, as matters stand, I say deliberately that I would not, as far as myself was concerned, have had things altered by so much as one iota. For it is only by reason of the depths I have plumbed that I have been able to measure the full height of that which, by God's grace and My Lady's, has been vouchsafed me. The unsinching and unbroken can

never savour the cup of forgiveness, and the healing touch of mercy and pity, as do those who have lain without the pale and void of hope.)

The vision I formed of the writer of the book, from her own delicious little bits of self-revelation which cropped out on almost every page, was entrancing to me.

I pictured her to myself as tall and graceful, bearing herself with the quiet assurance of a very distinctive individuality, yet welcomed by her smaller neighbours on terms which spoke volumes for her.

She was, I perceived, a landowner, and was filled with understandable joy by the feeling that the land under her foot as she walked was inalienably her very own.

She was young and supple and slender,—“How good it is to be alive!”—I read.—“Often I wonder whether many people feel the joy of living as I do. I hope, indeed, that they do. To me every moment of the twenty-four hours is ecstasy, varied ecstasy. . . . All movement is ecstasy. When I walk . . . it is for the rapture of the motion—the spring of arched insteps, supple limbs, swaying body, moist skin, and strong, slow heart-beats. . . .”

And again,—“I am full to my finger-tips of life, health, happiness; every minute of the day is a joy. . . . My home is perfect. . . . I have got my heart’s desire—life on Dartmoor till death.”

She had golden hair and a fine complexion, I learned. Her eyes would probably be blue or gray ; on this point her pages gave no light. She was on the best of terms with all the birds, animals, and children within her sphere, and her love of the Moor was a veritable religion, a perpetual pæan of praise and thanksgiving, and—I could see, if as yet perhaps but dimly—a means of grace and uplift, both for herself and through her to her readers.

Moreover, Bellever, which meant so much to me, seemed, in some strange way which I could not fathom, to mean still more to her. In some deep, hidden way Bellever was sacramental to her, and I could not but wonder, and long to know why.

She wrote of “the sanctuary of Bellever—the central Tor of Dartmoor,—the core of the heart of the Moor. Bellever is not only the centre of the Moor, you can see that it is the centre. Hey, the steadfast sentinel, looms midge-like against the eastern sky. Longaford lifts his huge bulk in the near west, and on the southern side are the low gray walls of the great Prison, coiled under the Hessarys like some savage mammoth reptile,”—my own very thought !—almost my very words !

So she too knew the grim gray Prison—but only from the outside. She could not possibly know it as I knew it, not feel the menace of it—past, present, and future,—as I felt it.

Yet there was in her large heart room amid all her

happiness of life for thought of the prisoned souls. For she wrote of,—“ the hopeful sunlight which gilds the dreary place, not in mockery, but in earnest of some happy future awaiting every weary convict whose cell window flashes quivering gold messages athwart the dusk rim of the tor-crowned hills.”

Ay, if human nature was all of her pattern and texture there might still be hope in life for weary convicts,—and possibly even for sin-bound souls, who, having emerged from the darkness, are strenuously set on plunging back into darkness deeper still.

And again, she wrote,—“ Bellever loves me more than any tor loves me, because I alone saw a certain vision of white manhood lying, like a sacrificial victim, upon one of his great altar-like slabs of granite. Ah, yes, Bellever and I have our secrets, one at least of which will be revealed, with fitting glory, when the Recording Angel at last opens his golden scroll. Only one who ever reads this book will understand the meaning of this passage, and I doubt if even he knows that he alone holds, and always will hold, my heart in the hollow of his hand.”—

How I pondered those strange weighty words, and wondered as to their hidden meaning !

They pointed surely to some great heart-sorrow which had come upon her on Bellever. And they

were the most—almost the only—sorrowful words in the whole of her good glad book.

Everywhere else she was the consoler, the un-failing adviser, the maker-up of quarrels, the joyful welcomer of new-born babies, human and otherwise, the best friend and counsellor of the living, and still more of the loving, the panegyrist of perpetual hope, the fearless comforter of the dying and the bereaved.

And all these things so amply perhaps—so it suggested itself to me—because of that very sorrow which was in some strange way connected with Believer.

Further—in my conception of her, derived from her own pages—she was a skilled and conscientious housekeeper ; a mighty walker,—I could imagine the joyous spring and grace of her carriage ; she had the keenest of eyes and ears for all the sights and sounds around her, the sense of an artist for all the wonderful colours of the Moor, and the pen of a poet in describing them.

And her deeper thoughts.—On one page I read, of one of her humble characters :

“ He was that mightiest being in all creation—a man, and a man who had risen to the summit of manhood’s perfection, inasmuch as he was ready to lay down his life for his love. I turned away in silence. Speech would have been an unthinkable sacrilege. I made my way out of the field, with bent

head, thanking God that my unworthy eyes had been permitted to gaze straight into that holy of holies, the heart of a normal man."

I was seized, as I read that, of the sudden, overwhelming desire that she should gaze also into the heart of at least one abnormal man. And I wondered what she would make of it.

And again I read, with a strange vital hunger for closer touch with one who knew so well and could so write :

"Day, the blood-stained, was dead. Twilight was come to soothe and heal with her dews of earth and her stars of heaven. It was symbolic of his heart, the heart of a man in which bloody strife was dead, and wherein now reigned the soft darkness of faith, fragrant with the dews of sorrow, gemmed with the stars of hope."

What would she have to say, I wondered, to a heart which hugged bloody strife as its only hope, and resolutely chose the darkness, and shut out the light ?

And she was a student of faces, as indeed every delineator of character must needs be ; and I too found that study a fascinating one. What was her own face like, I wondered ; and craved the sight of it.

For there is nothing more futile than the attempt to visualise the unknown. The result is rarely satisfactory. Imagination is, as a rule, a cleverer,

because a kinder and more sympathetic, artist than Life. We limn the ideal as we would have it, but Life always sticks to actual facts, and actual fact is not always beautiful.

The craving grew within me to seek out this girl, or woman, or whatever she was, and learn how near my ideal of her came to her real self.

Again I read,—“ Each rough-hewn tragedy contains the germ of love. There is no such thing in the world as unmixed evil. May we not hope that love will triumph over all things before the end ? ”

Yes, she, in the spaciousness and graciousness of her life on these uplifting heights, might indeed so hope, but for one whose life lay in the shadows there could be no such joyous outlook. She did not know everything. How could any girl or woman fathom the covered ways, the hidden darknesses, of the hearts of men.

Yet her faith in ultimate good was incurably strong, for she ended on this triumphant note,—“ Such is my Credo. I believe that in her last agony she, poor outcast, turned to God and threw herself on His infinite mercy, even as she died. To whom else can we turn when we are forsaken by man and utterly desolate ? He knows, He knows, He knows, —or He would not be God. . . . I saw that out of all evil, love rises triumphant at last. I saw that while the Moor stands, clothed in her regal purple, as long as the Dart flows from her mighty bosom, so

will love stand, royal, invincible ; so will love flow unfailing through all the ages, subduing all things to himself before the end."

(Knowing me now, as you do, through and through, you can understand,—you who wrote that book,—all that it was to me. For two whole days, in the thoughts it kindled in me, and in my eager search of its pages for some adequate vision of yourself, it lifted me out of my slough of evil and despondency. It dropped a new white seed of interest into my life. In the end, as you know, it drew me out of darkness into the light of a new hope.

It has seemed to me since, that I searched your book very much as Christian men and women were bidden to search the Scriptures. I read with care and diligence for larger knowledge of yourself, and eventually for indications by which I might find you out.

In the first place, however, and on the spur of the feeling induced in me, I wrote to you direct, in care of your publishers, begging permission to call on you, and, if that were granted, the favour of your address. But, during the days which must elapse before I could possibly receive an answer, I also set to work on my own account to track you down in your moorland home, from the indications given in the book itself.)

IT proved in reality a less difficult business than I expected.

Careful study of the map, and taking as indicatory points—Believer, Princetown, and some height called by the writer of the book “Dream Tor,” which I could not identify, but from which Teignmouth and the sea were visible, three days’ steady tramping and much casually cautious enquiry led me to the little village named by the writer of the book—Graystone.

There, after tea at the little inn under the shadow of the gray old church spire, I was directed to follow the lane down past the church till I came to a house with green windows. And in due course I stood outside the little green gate that led into the forecourt of Heysham House.

It was a golden evening. The sky was clear pale blue. The level beams of the sun bathed all the Moor in front of the house, and the string of Tors which topped it, with a radiance of gold upon their greens and grays which had in it something of almost unearthly beauty. I was glad to see it so for the first time. It was so perfectly in keeping

with all I had been imagining of her who lived there.

The house was evidently a very old one with a new wing added, built, all in keeping, of Dartmoor granite, and roofed with low-browed russet thatch. The doorway, in the older part, was heavily arched, and above it a brass sundial shone in the reflected glow from the Moor and the Tors. It was just such a house as I could have imagined and would have chosen for the writer of that book.

I knocked at the door, wondering much at my own temerity, but still more impelled, by that within me which had led me thus far in my quest, to go through with it to the end.

And how little I imagined what that end would be !

Indeed and indeed—how little ! How utterly unconscious of the magnitude of what I was doing did I knock on that door !—just a heavily-arched, low-browed green door ! . . . the door to new life in this world,—the doorway to the larger life of the next ! But of this, at the time, I knew nothing.

The door was opened by a comely, middle-aged woman, who eyed me, I thought, without any special disfavour, if with some surprise.

“ I have come to see the writer of that book about the Moor,” I said bluntly. “ Can I see her ? ”

She hesitated ; then asked, “ Did she ask you to come ? ”

“ Through her book—yes. She does not know

me, nor I her. But I beg of you to ask her if I may speak with her."

Perhaps she noticed my weariness, for I had walked far,—or the anxious desire in my face. Perhaps she was not unaccustomed to such callers.

"You'd maybe better come in," she said.

I followed her in, and after seeing me seated, she went away through the curtains which covered a doorway at the far end of the room, and I heard the click of a distant door-latch.

It was a long low room, with a massive crooked beam running the length of the ceiling, and an immense fire-place with the usual Devonshire narrow curtain along its top, and a fire of peats smouldering redly on a great flat iron trestle raised about a foot from the hearth.

On the shelf above the fire-place was a row of gleaming copper pans and kettles. The only window was alongside the door. The golden glow from the Moor and the Tors filled the room with its tempered glory—a soft suffused radiance which had in it something of mysterious charm.

I can see it all in my mind exactly as I saw it that first wonderful evening. It is great joy to me to recall it and live it all over again. And many, many times since then have I done that.

Between the window and the fire-place was a writing-table, with dainty furnishings and obviously in constant use. Round the room were bookcases

and cabinets. All the furniture, I noticed, was carved black oak and looked very old and solid.

Everywhere and everything subtly conveyed that same impression, which the outside of the house had already given me, of age and solidity. There was about it all a novel feeling of peace and security which ministered in some strange way to my sick soul.

The solid old house and the solid old furniture seemed to say, "Here we are. We have served many generations and shall serve many more. You can rely safely upon us."

I felt, in short—I, who had had little experience of such things, and had only left a prison cell to become a homeless wanderer—that I was in the quiet, deep-rooted and well-ordered home of a gentlewoman,—and therewith a novel peace and contentment of soul.

The distant door-latch clicked again, the curtains at the far end of the room opened, and the elderly serving-woman came in.

"Miss Beatrice will see you. She will be with you in a minute or two," she said quietly, and withdrew. And I sat and waited, knowing that when next the curtains opened it would be to admit the lady of the book.

And as I sat and watched them hungrily, in no little perturbation of mind, as the full realisation of my intrusion welled over me, there was borne

in upon me the curious feeling that I had gone through just this same experience before—of waiting eagerly for the parting of the curtains to admit a longed-for presence.

I knew I had not. My mind was preternaturally clear, and alive with keenest anticipation. And yet the feeling was strong upon me. But as I puzzled over it the explanation came.

How many times had I stood on my stool at my cell-window gazing out at the dark curtains of the east and waiting for the coming of the new day? For, even though it was but a new day of prison toil and dull subservience to prison rules, it still reduced by one the total of the days I had to serve, and so I looked forward to each as it came with the hunger for freedom upon me.

Now, in just that same way, I sat gazing at these more material curtains, and I wondered briefly what their opening would bring me. . . . What I was there for ;—what I was going to say and do ;—how explain myself and my unwarrantable intrusion ;—I knew not.

All I could say was that the reading of her book had constrained me to come,—as a sick or suffering child turns instinctively to its mother if it has one,—if not, then to any who looks like possible help.

And I was sick and suffering if ever man in this world was. I thought she would understand. Yes, the writer of that book, with her immense faith in

the innate goodness of God, and the possibilities awaiting even the convicts in Dartmoor Jail, could not fail to understand.

How long I waited in this state of tense expectancy I know not. But at length the distant latch clicked softly again. The curtains fluttered, just as the curtains of the dawn used to do when the rosy fingers of light stole up to part them.

Then a soft white hand drew one aside. That was the very first I saw of her—the slim white hand which had written the words that had drawn me to her. And then she came through—My Lady of the Moor-Book, my Dear Lady of the Moor herself.

And at the very first glimpse of her face, in the soft golden glamour of the room, I knew that it was well with me, and I thanked God I had come.

As to what really happened at that momentous first moment of meeting I have but the vaguest recollection. I have had to draw upon both our memories, chiefly upon My Lady's, for she was by much the more collected of the two. And that was natural after all, natural both to her and to the circumstances.

Nature endowed her with an unusually calm and lofty mind and heart, and these, as I came to learn, she lifted to the highest plane of equanimity by most fervent prayer, by retirement sufficient to relieve her from the over-pressure of the world, and

by closest communion and intimacy with the Higher Powers.

Life had not brought me into connection with specially prayerful people, since my mother died. I never met,—I had never even imagined it possible for any mortal to live on such terms of personal familiarity and friendship with her Maker as did My Lady. She was, still is, and will be till I die, the most wonderful being in that respect that I ever met.

In recalling all the details of our great friendship, as I love to do, I have never once myself seen her unduly upset about even the most untoward happening.

That she could be so,—that she had but recently gone through fiery trial, and was even now still in the valley of shadows, I only learned later from herself.

But all this I only came to know by degrees.

At that first meeting I do not doubt that I behaved—as she once in one of her light moods assured me,—like a mixture of stuck pig and starving dog.

She has told me that, as she came through the curtains, I sprang up out of my chair like a coiled spring or a striking adder, and came at her with craving hands which grasped both hers as a drowning man clutches at straws.

I do not doubt that it was so—that I clutched her in most unmannerly fashion and eyed her hungrily

and thirstily,—stared at her, in fact, in so rude a way that any other might well have taken umbrage. For, you see, it was not simply even the writer of that book which had so profoundly moved me that I was laying hold of in this rude fashion,—it was, in some vague way—not even understood by myself at the time—a sudden outleap of my soul towards a new and most amazing hope.

My own confused recollection is of the feel of two soft hands in which warm pulses throbbed, and of two gray eyes full of quiet understanding, and of a calm, high, gracious face, touched, as well it might be, with something of surprise, but more of curiosity.

And, as I gazed into the clear depths of the calm gray eyes, a quietness of soul such as I had never before experienced fell upon me, a sudden filling to the brim of the cup of expectancy such as comes to a man but once or twice in a lifetime. I felt, as I have never felt before or since, a sudden sense of absolute self-surrender to the sweet soul that looked out through those gray eyes—a sense of implicit and unbounded confidence that here was good incarnate,—that it was well to be here.

I was raised and excited of course at this much-anticipated meeting ; but that, so far as I can recall it, was the feeling that was in me at the time.

She was the first to speak, as, again, was but natural, for her wits were always consummately

within her control and eloquence is one of her many gifts.

And the first words that passed between us were, I believe, somewhat as follows :

“What can I do for you ?” she asked, withdrawing her hands and stepping back a pace or two. And that I know was ever her first thought with strangers who sought her uninvited. “And—if you please, sir,—who are you, and what brought you ?”

“I . . . I . . . I . . .”—she tells me I stammered, and I do not doubt it, though it was not one of my usual failings, for I was a silent soul and rather said nothing than say it badly. “Your book,”—I managed to get out.

“Which book ?”

“Your Moor-Book. . . . Bellever . . . and the Prison . . . and——”

“Ah !”—and she eyed me with increased interest.

“It appeals to you ?” she asked quietly.

“To my very soul.”

“With reason ?”

“With reason such as few can have.”

“Ah !” she breathed quietly again, in something like a grateful sigh.

Then, looking levelly across at me out of the serenity of her soul, she said quietly, “Please come !” and turned and went through the curtains, and I followed, wondering.

Along a corridor, with windows on one side and many cabinets and paintings on the other. But the windows faced away from the sunset and gave on to a sheltered garden and farmyard and trees, and so the light was growing dim. Besides, my mind was wholly with my conductress and these other things engaged it but slightly.

My clearest recollection of that long passage is the stately poise of a head crowned with thick golden coils which seemed to catch and radiate such light as there was, and I followed it somewhat mazedly, wondering whither it was leading me.

The latch I heard before clicked again, and we passed out through a wooden porch into the glimmering golden twilight, and in two steps entered a tiny white chamber in which, like a steady star of Hope, hung a ruby lamp before a gold and white altar.

The pure whiteness of the little sanctuary was full again of the golden glamour of the sunset, suffused and commingled with the tones of stained-glass windows. On the wall above the altar was a white crucified Christ, stained blood-red by the ruby lamp.

The lady of the book passed noiselessly into one of the rows of seats and sank quietly on to her knees, and resumed her prayers, which my troubled conscience told me my unauthorised coming had interrupted. I knelt by her side and surrendered

myself to the strangeness and sacramental peace of it all.

We knelt so for a very considerable time ; she, immersed in prayer and obviously oblivious to anything else ; I, in a vast confusion of mind and soul, wondering why I was there and what I expected her to be able to do for me.

The spirit of peace and uplift of that little white chapel was all about me like an active atmosphere. It pressed in upon me on every side. It seemed indeed to penetrate and permeate my physical being. It was, I perceived as plainly as though it had been as actually visible as a Dartmoor mist, an atmosphere charged and surcharged with prayer. And in my blindness and bitterness I fought against it even as I knelt, though I felt certain she was praying for me with all her heart and soul.

I know I knelt there saying over and over again with wild insurgence, "I will not ! I will not ! I will not !" And yet—why else had I come ?

And when I lifted my eyes they rested on the pitiful face of the dying Christ, red in the light of the ruby lamp. The lamp was burning low towards its renewal and flickered slightly now and again. And whenever it did so the face on the cross seemed alive in its agony of compassionate tenderness.

I stared at it hypnotically. It was only a piece of carved ivory on a piece of wood. I knew that perfectly well. But, to me, in the soul-silence of

that little white sanctuary, it spoke with an insistent voice that rapped sharply on the tightened strings of my heart.

“ This for thee !—and thou wilt not ! ”

Again and again it struck full at the very centre of my being, at the very roots of my life.

And I set my teeth and said to my soul,—“ I will not ! I will not ! I will not ! ”

And yet I was conscious of a growing conviction that whatsoever this girl kneeling by my side should require me to do I must do it. And that what she would require of me would be nothing less than completest surrender of that for which alone I lived.

Again and again I asked myself what I had come for. I vituperated myself for coming. But I was there.

Possibly, in her great wisdom and intimate knowledge of troubled souls, My Lady purposely extended her prayers that night—perhaps to give me time to pull myself together,—perhaps to let the sanctity of her little holy place have its due effect upon me.

But at last she raised herself noiselessly into her seat, and sat for a few moments gazing quietly at the Christ and the altar, as though the sacred privacy of her prayers must not be too closely intruded upon by other—I had almost written outside matters. But when once I used that word she corrected me quickly. “ There are no outside

matters," she said. "In here the outside becomes the inside, and nothing is too small to come in."

I had risen also and sat waiting her pleasure, in a curious turmoil of hope and foreboding as to what that pleasure would be.

Finally, making the sign of the cross, she turned to me and said quietly :

"Do you care to tell me your name? Don't if you would rather not."

"I have more than one name. To some I am known as Ian Carril."

She reached out an impulsive hand, and again I experienced the charm of her soft, sufficing touch.

"I guessed as much, but was not sure. And I am glad to greet you, Ian Carril. But did you not get my letter?"

"I have had no letter. But I could not wait. Your book constrained me and I had to come. . . . Though why I have come I do not know, nor how you can help me. Did your letter tell me not to come?"

"It asked you to at all events postpone coming just now—for purely personal reasons. But since you have come I am glad to greet you. I have read a good deal of you. And some of you, much of you, I do not like. You are too sombre and hopeless. But I recognise its worth. It comes from the heart. You have had trouble and sorrow,"

“ I live with them. For nine years they have been my only companions.”

“ That is too long. Trouble and sorrow are good in their places. We could not get along without them. But . . . as only companions ! . . . and of one’s own choice ! . . . No ! Then they become heavy burdens and fetter the soul. It is like a man deliberately choosing to live behind the bars when he could, if he chose, live a free man.”

I stared at her amazedly. Did she then know all about me ?

“ You know me then ? ” I jerked.

“ Only what you have yourself told me. Do not tell me anything you would rather not. Tell me only how I can help you in your trouble.”

It is no use consulting a physician and concealing the truth. As I sat gazing into those true gray eyes I knew I could trust her implicitly—her discretion, her wisdom, her uttermost sympathy. There was that in her virgin-motherly look that drew my soul out of its hiding-place.

“ For five years and more I was a convict in the Prison over there ”—I jerked my head towards Princetown.

“ Then I thank God for you ! ” she said warmly, and took hold of my hand again. “ For five years and more I have been praying for you and the rest. You are an answer to my prayers, and I am glad. Tell me, if you will.”

And I told her ; brokenly and stumblingly—I told her everything,—baldly enough and as shortly as I could ; and,—I remember, cautiously avoiding any mention of that other man’s name lest any whisper of my intentions should reach him. And she listened absorbedly.

“ Why I came to you, I do not know,” I ended. “ Your book—the parts about Bellever—and the infinite goodness of God—the final triumph of goodness and love—they worked in me. . . . I had to come . . . though why . . . ”

“ I thank God that you came ! It was He brought you in answer to my prayers. Many come to me so, and at times it is given to me to help them. This little chapel has heard many worse stories than yours. There are, to me, clean sins and dirty ones. Yours is sin, indeed, but to me it is one of the clean sins. It is not for yourself and it is not mean. . . . But, my friend, it—cannot—be ! You have got to put it behind you and leave your vengeance to God. He will see to it, you may be sure ; and He would not have you commit sin in order to help Him.”

“ I knew you would say that,” I said gloomily. “ For nine years I have lived only for this. I would as lief die as give it up.”

“ Better to die clean than soiled beyond redemption ;—though, indeed, as to that last I am very broad-minded ;—as God Himself is, as I very well

know. Even if you did this thing I would never give up my hopes for you. If I feel so, how much more must He ? ”

“ I cannot give it up. It is all I live for.”

“ You *must* give it up. And you will live for better things,” she said, with a sweet imperiousness.

I knew in the end she must have her way, but all the evil impulses of my nine lost years were up in arms at the prospect of their baulking, and they fought against her furiously.

“ I know,” she said, with astonishing acumen. “ It is not easy to give up in a moment what you have nursed for years,—even though you know it to be an evil child. But it has got to be. . . . Where are you staying ? ”

“ At Postbridge,”—and I started up, wondering how I could possibly get back across the Moor in the dark.

“ You cannot get back to-night. They will put you up at the inn. Will you promise me, before you go, to give this thing up ? ” and she looked into my eyes with winning entreaty.

“ No. . . . I cannot. . . . Not yet. . . . In time perhaps. . . . I do not know. . . . It is the only thing I have to live for.”

“ You will find others,” she said meaningly, and took my hand again. “ You are meant for better things than to die on the gallows, Ian Carril. Will you do one thing to please me ? ”

“ I will do anything but that.”

“ Then take a room at the inn here, go over to-morrow for your things, and stop here for a time. Will you do that ? ”

“ Yes, I will do that much.”

She turned and sank to her knees again for a moment, and I stood looking down at her bowed head and the crowning wonder of her hair. It was very beautiful. The golden coils glinted in the flickering light of the ruby lamp. Little tendrils of spun gold clustered about her white neck and twisted themselves round my lonely heart. I had never felt towards any woman as I did towards this one.

Then she rose, crossed herself again, and before opening the door, picked up a freshly-charged lamp from under a seat. Stepping lightly up on to the bench, and placing one foot on the rail in front, she leaned forward, reached up to the ruby lamp, and lit the fresh one at it by means of a match, and slipped it into the swinging socket in place of the other one.

I had watched with some apprehension lest she should overbalance, or the rail should give under her. It looked very precarious. But it was done in a moment with the deftness of custom, and she came towards me carrying the dying lamp in her hand.

“ It is like the love of God which burns on and on for ever,” she smiled as she came.

Then she opened the door and we went out into the night.

She led me to a little wicket-gate in the granite wall.

“You cannot lose your way. Keep straight on up the lane and you’ll come to the church and the inn. You will come to me again to-morrow night?”

“Yes, I will come.”

She gave me her hand again and turned and went into the house, and I went back, slowly and somewhat mazedly, along the road by which I had come.

There was still light in the sky. At that time of year it rarely goes quite dark there, I found. There was even a dull smoulder of amber in the west. As I went slowly along the lane, the fragrance of growing things—roses and honeysuckle, I thought—was all about me, and presently I came to running water—a bridge below which flowed a swift brown stream.

I sat down on a great boulder on the bank of the stream and thought it all over, but as yet mostly about her. And, in spite of the resurgence of the evil that was in me, I thanked God for putting it into my heart to seek her out, and her for admitting me. The very fact and manner of her receiving me so—an absolute stranger,—and accepting me so—on my own simple word, was a revelation to me of the gracious possibilities of a new and higher plane than any I had ever reached.

And as I sat and brooded, I conjured up the vision of her again,—the golden crown of her hair,—the winning gray eyes,—the sweet high face, now rapt in prayer, now bent towards me in quick sympathy and understanding,—the black gown which set off the fairness of her neck and face,—the unconscious grace of her every movement,—the golden glamour of that room and of the little white chapel,—the stately poise of the head that had led me down the passage from the room to the chapel.

The evil in me cried out loudly that all these were but means to her end. That she was set on beguiling me from that on which I was set. They cried, “Beware !”

Then on the stillness of the night I heard her voice again,—“Better to die clean than soiled beyond redemption. . . . You are meant for better things than to die on the gallows, Ian Carril. . . . Leave your vengeance to God. He will see to it. . . . He would not have you commit sin in order to help Him. . . . Will you promise me, before you go ? . . .”

And I had gone without promising.

So clear and insistent was her voice to me—it seemed to come from just the other side of the bridge,—that I could have sworn it was herself speaking there ;—and I sat and stared across into the shadows, and wondered vaguely if she could have followed me to plead with me once more before

the darkness of the night settled down upon my soul.

The fixed resolve of nine hard years to be surrendered at the asking of a girl! . . .

“Fool!” snickered my demons.—“To be beguiled by a face and a head of yellow hair!” And the strife began again.

When I rose at last to go, my mind in a tumult with it all, my eyes lighted on a mighty pointed crown, silhouetted black against the dying amber of the sky, just above—apparently resting on—the tops of the overarching trees in front of me, and I stood staring at it in surprise that was not very far from awe.

It seemed like a veritable endorsement of all My Lady of the Book had been impressing upon me. Here I lingered in the shadows. There above me hung the crown. Everything seemed to work against me.

Only when at last I moved on did I discover that this crown at all events was a solid and material one. It was, in fact, the four-pointed crown of the old church-spire just topping the trees, and by them cut off sharp just below where the points rose up out of their battlemented base. But never afterwards—often as I saw it so—did I lose that first striking impression of it on my troubled mind.

(My Lady would have found in it a symbol of

hope. And perhaps she would not have been very far wrong.)

I went on to the inn and arranged to stay there. They gave me the quietest room in the house, overlooking the garden and the huge rolling slopes, still rimmed with light, of what I came to know later as Hamildown. But, though my bodily comfort was great, I slept little that night.

My life was at its crisis and I knew it. I was at the great divide which confronts most souls at least once on the long journey. As I decided now, so would it be with me through all eternity.

And my demons gibed at the word, and told me all that kind of thing was long since exploded and I need not worry myself about it.

Next day I hired a trap and drove over to Post-bridge for my belongings; a long drive across the open moor under a low gray sky, with swathes of low-hanging cloud on many of the Tors, and drifting mists, and sudden wild sweeps of rain on a gusty wind that tried the temper of both man and beast.

We made a prosperous journey, however, in spite of the weather, and on the way home the sun broke through in the west and set the dripping moorland all agleam with gold and diamonds. And after a hot bath and dinner I was standing once more on the little bridge over the brown stream, in the lane that led to the house with the green casements.

And as I stood looking down into the swift amber

flow, with the bright green cresses swinging to and fro just below the surface, and the rushes and forget-me-nots clustering thick along its banks, I became aware again of My Lady's voice just as I had heard it in the darkness the night before.

And, following the sound to its source, I found it came from a boulder a little lower down the stream, against which the water welled melodiously with exactly the intonations of her own musical speech.

With her words ringing in my ears I went on, and presently I was sitting again, all alone, in the little white chapel. I noticed now that it was covered outside with climbing blood-red roses, which crept up into the brown thatch and twined round the granite cross over the doorway.

I sat and gazed at the Christ on the cross behind the ruby lamp, and the figures on the wall above the altar,—the Good Shepherd carrying a white lamb in His arms and holding by His crook a darker one at His feet ;—a Madonna and Child ;—an angel in golden armour, with a drawn sword, trampling on a dragon. They all seemed to offer me morals and suggestions.

Over the back of the bench in front of me was a white veil and a rosary, and on the long seat many books. The setting sun shone in through the open door, and lit up the flowers on the altar, and filled the little white place with golden glamour again.

While I waited,—since my own thoughts were

anything but cheerful companions,—I picked up one and another of the books on the bench in front of me. And I lighted on one—a little book of prayer—written or compiled by one whose name touched lightly some chord in my memory.

I could not at first find any clue to it. Then suddenly I remembered. It was the name of the old priest's 'dear daughter in Christ,' of whom I had never thought since that day in the pine wood above Davos. It simply struck me as curious that I should come across it again at this time, and I opened it and read some of the prayers.

And presently, light and noiseless as a shadow, the Lady of the Book came in and sank upon her knees in the front seat.

I had not seen her come. My head was aching horribly with my sleepless night and the turmoil of my brain, and perhaps with the keen wind of the Moor. I had closed my tired eyes for a moment, and when I opened them she was kneeling there in front of me, dressed now in a flowing pale blue gown with rich lace about it.

I rubbed my eyes to make sure I was not dreaming, and when they happened to light on the Madonna up above I noticed that My Lady's robe and hers were of precisely the same shade.

Whether she had seen me in my remote corner I did not know. I sat and waited and watched her. And again there stole over me, and in upon me, that

sense of an atmosphere charged with prayer, of an unusually close intimacy between this fair suppliant and Him to whom she prayed. I had never myself felt anything of the kind, but I could well believe, as I sat watching the fervour of her devotions, that in that little white chamber they two met and spoke together.

I had ample opportunity of watching her, both then and later, and I know that at such times she was absolutely oblivious to all earthly things,—in the spirit far more than in the body.

I wondered if she was praying for me, among all her petitions. I did not doubt that she got many answers to her prayers. For if prayers ever were answered it seemed to me it would be hard to refuse such as hers.

At last she lifted her head, raised herself noiselessly into her seat, and sat looking quietly and full of thought at the altar and the Christ.

Then she crossed herself and rose and turned towards me, with outstretched hands and welcoming smile.

“You are comfortably settled at the inn?” she asked, and the gray eyes searched my face—and more. My heart and my conscience felt them.

“Quite comfortably, thank you. They have given me nice quiet rooms, but I did not sleep much all the same.”

“I suppose not,” she answered understandingly.

"But you will. You must get up to some of the Tors. I have certain favourites. I will take you. . . . You have not yet quite come to the point of promising me what I want, I see."

I shook my head gloomily.

"It will be all right," she said, with most cheerful decision, as though indeed she knew all about it and had settled it all herself. "I have been praying for it and you. And you are so well worth praying for that I know my prayer will be answered. Are you going to steal my book?" she smilingly asked. I had forgotten it was still in my hand.

"I was struck by the name," I said. "I was reading it before you came in. I met an old priest at Davos and he begged me to call on a lady of this name. She also lived on Dartmoor. I have never thought of her from that day to this. Do you happen to know her?"

"Yes, I happen to know her," she smiled. "The dear old man——"

"You knew him also?"

"He is one of my very dearest friends."

"He begged me to call on this lady——"

"And you came."

I looked at her in doubt as to her meaning.

"I am ——," she smiled. "It was to me Father Dominic sent you, and you have come, you see. Just as you will to That Other. If you set yourself to it you will find it as interesting as I do to watch

how He works things out. He is very wonderful, and such a gentleman. He never neglects and He never forgets. Of course, if we ask things that would not be best for us He cannot do what we want. And often He does it in quite a different way from what we expect. But He never neglects and He never forgets."

"You are a great believer."

"I have reason to be. Now, to-morrow, if you will be here at ten I will take you one of my favourite walks. Tell them to put you up lunch for two at the inn and I will bring coffee in a thermos. I have been working hard all day and I am going to bed early. Good night, and God be with you!"

I went along the lane, with the great black crown floating above the tree-tops in front of me, and lingered on the bridge again to hear her voice in the stream. And it said to me, as though she herself were speaking :

"He never neglects. He never forgets. It will be all right." Over and over again it said it as long as I stayed to listen. The insistent murmur of it followed me up the lane.

It was another wonderful evening. The sun had burned furiously to his setting as though resentful of the day's vailing. The east was still dark with the driven clouds, but up above me the rain-washed sky was tenderest pale-blue, like My Lady's robes in the chapel, and through the trees I caught

gleams of the western sky all aglow yet with the after-sunset.

With some idea of tiring myself to the point of getting some sleep that night, I turned to the right by the church, and struck up the long white road that ran up and up the steep hill-side straight into the pale-blue sky at the top.

I tramped on and on, and the gap at the head of the wide valley in which Graystone lies,—where the great flank of Hamildown sweeps down in smooth, flowing curves to meet the sharper fall of the opposite ridge,—was all purest lucent green suffused with amber, so exquisitely soft and rare in the tenuity of its dilatation that one seemed to be gazing into the very atmosphere of heaven. And here and there across it, like the iron bars of a cell-window, were floating islands of cloud as black as ink. Their other sides were no doubt glowing gold, but the sides they turned to me were ebon black.

The bold curves of the hill-tops were silhouetted against it as clean and sharp as though cut out of black cardboard. Where the opposing hill-flanks met at the head of the valley, a bristle of forest-land showed like the serrations of a mighty saw.

Even the sunset sky seemed bent to My Lady's service in this work to which she had set her hand and heart—ay, and all her sweet, strenuous, prayerful soul.

Her words kept ringing in my ears,—“ Better to

die clean. . . . You are meant for better things than to die on the gallows. . . . He will see to it. . . . He never neglects and He never forgets. . . . It will be all right ! ”

They pounded at my soul as I plodded steadily upwards, and the black-barred, amber-green sky seemed to emphasise them. Those rare sweet heavenly spaces beyond were to me like that to which My Lady would have me attain. The ebon bars were my own familiar demons who would hold me back.

The wisdom which had kept her from pressing the matter for the moment was not without its effect on me. I paid tribute to her acumen. It commended her both to my mind and my heart.

I was mentally and bodily tired. Discussion of one's sins, even with her and on the very highest plane, would have been too much for me. I would not—I could not—have said one word to wound her. But I should inevitably have gone home sore and bruised—perhaps even with some aversion to any further reference to the matter.

But as it was, in her wise and sympathetic understanding of human nature, and perhaps especially of the hearts of men, she had left the seeds she had planted to strike root in their own way and at their own time. And I was grateful to her.

Yes,—she was undeniably wise and thoughtful. And the earnest advice—the strenuous desire—of

this wise and thoughtful soul was that I should relinquish that for which alone I had suffered so much and endured so much,—that I should cast it all behind me,—leave that man to the God he outraged,—and settle down to the ordinary routine of life like other ordinary men.

It would not be easy. If you have nursed a thing in your soul for nine black years,—hugging it to you as your only hope, feeding it on tears of bitterness and the ashes of acrid recollection,—even though it be an evil thing and you know it, it is not an easy thing to surrender it at the first demand. No, not even though that demand come through the medium of a sweet wise saint in human guise.

And then—the cowardly weakness of it all! With every justifiable reason for removing so grievous a defiler of God's fairest handiwork,—to let him live on for further mischief! How could I? Was it right that I should?

“Leave him to God!” said the old priest,—a godly man, whatever his particular tenets.

“Leave him to God!” said My Lady,—a saintly woman, even to my limited experience of such.

But, without doubt, God at times—perhaps always—chooses human instruments to carry out His designs. And if ever human instrument was designed to carry out a special vengeance surely I was in this case.

So again the strife in me went on as I climbed the

white road, till its granite side-walls failed and I was on the open Moor. I stood awhile looking down into the broad valley below, where only here and there a twinkling light showed, and out over the distant hills, ridge beyond ridge just faintly visible under the paler rim that edged the horizon.

Somewhere down there, to the left, lay the brown thatched roofs of Heysham,—the old house, the fair white sanctuary,—and there My Lady was sleeping in confident hope that all would yet go well with me.

She had poured out her soul in prayer for me and she had no doubts as to the result.—“He never neglects, and He never forgets. He is very wonderful, and such a gentleman!”

The western fires had burned themselves out. The tender green and amber had gone out of the sky and left it the colour of steel. In the east the moon had risen and completed the rout of the rain-clouds, and there the sky was now as wonderful as the sunset had been.

As though from out of the moon had come a mighty rushing wind, the black clouds had been thrust aside and rolled back as from a centre in curly scrolls whose inner sides were silver, leaving a clear space of illimitable depth across which travelled thin white fleeces hurrying to escape. And the wonder of that gracious inner void was like that of the sunset—a revelation of infinity.

Those thin white clouds marvellously heightened the effect of the distance behind, I noticed. A cloudless black void would not have conveyed half the feeling of fathomless depth. So with life, it seemed to me. Neither the wholly clouded nor the wholly unclouded life is life at its truest and fullest. It is the mingling of the lights and shadows that make manifest its measureless heights and depths.

On my right rose a rocky Tor with a still greater one behind him, and the ridge on my left was a-bristle with smaller Tors. I spread my coat on the ground in that great solitude and lay flat, with my head on my folded arms, and looked up into the wonder-spaces of the moonlit sky. There was not a sound . . . infinite silence . . . infinite depths of heavenly space. . . . I felt that I lay, as it were, face to face with God.

I might have been the last lone soul left on earth, —a puny human soul lying there, bare and abashed, under the eye of his Maker.

And there I lay, and thought, and thought, and did my very best to bring myself to My Lady's way of thinking. For truly, in the light of this latest revelation of herself as the old priest's dear daughter in Christ, who had made the lost souls in Princetown such objects of her fervent prayers, it did seem as though some special influence had led me to her.

For years I had fought against it, and so unconsciously against her, knowing only that unless

I won the evil day my sole desire and object in life were gone, and I might as well be dead.

And now we were come to grips, and I had a feeling in me that she would prevail. How could any man stand out against such an one in happy league with powers omnipotent? . . . I found within myself also a great curiosity to see how she would carry on the fight.

That it would be in some novel and thoroughly characteristic fashion I felt sure. The appeal she made to me, mentally, and physically, and to some extent spiritually, was enormous; and to myself, up there in the gracious silence and spacious darkness of the Moor-night, I was forced to admit it.

I WAS sitting in the little white chapel next morning before ten o'clock, with the homely sounds of the farmyard filtering in through the open door and windows, and away up on the Moor the lambs were calling to their mothers.

After sitting quietly absorbing the utter peace of it all for a time, I picked up one of the many books strewn about the bench in front of me. They all presented themselves to me as bits of herself. From these she drew her inspirations, and the spiritual uplift which set that look of hopeful confidence in the calm gray eyes.

As it happened, it was the same little compilation of prayers which had brought me to the knowledge of her other self the night before. As I was examining its title page with added interest, I saw that the fly-leaves were all written over, and the writing, I felt sure, was her own.

It consisted of texts, verses, lines from the lives of the saints—little scraps of spiritual help which she had evidently desired to keep constantly before her. And many of them came close home to me.

I read,—“*Judge not that ye be not judged. Only infinite knowledge is adequate for judging.*”

"The weaker and unworthier a soul is in itself, the greater is My delight in uplifting and adorning it, and the more does it ultimately add to My glory."

"Let me judge the weakness of others with the same tenderness and pity that You have shown to me."

"Suffering is not sent in anger or punishment, but with love, to make you more like to Me, the Man of Sorrows."

There were some lines beginning :

*Is any grieved or tired ? Yea, by God's Will ;
Surely God's will alone is good and best ;
O, weary man, in weariness take rest.
O, hungry man, by hunger feast thy fill,
Discern thy good beneath a mask of ill,
Or build of loneliness thy secret nest. . . .*

And then, by the eclipse of the light in the doorway, I became aware of My Lady standing there and smiling in at me.

She was dressed all in brown, with short skirts for the Moor, and strong little brown shoes, and her face was radiant.

"A whole day out always sends my mercury away up," she said gaily, as we struck up the Moor past the stream. "And it is a unique joy to have an intelligent man to go with. Women as a rule do talk such piffle. Don't you think so, Ian Carril ?"

"I've had so little to do with women. Certainly most of those I saw at one time were very piffly,—pleasure-chasers, one and all, and never getting there, it seemed to me."

“ Exactly. Why, I’ve had women come up here where we’re going, and talk fashions the whole time. Fashions don’t interest us on Dartymoor one little bit——”

I glanced at her tailor-made serge, which seemed to me the height of excellence in cut and finish. And she caught me at it,—there was very little missed her quick observant eye—and she laughed. “ Oh, one dresses correctly, of course. Noblesse oblige. But this is all home-made, and I shall wear it for three more years at least. This happens to be its first. I’m going to take you to some of the places in my book. I wonder if you’ll recognise them.”

“ I shall. I’ve got it at my finger-ends. I studied it very closely, you see. It appealed to me as very few books ever have done. That, I suppose, was because of my special circumstances. And then I studied it in order to get some idea of the writer,—and then again to find her out.”

“ And how did your idea of the writer fit with fact when you had so cleverly found her out ? ”

“ Very well in some respects. Not at all in others.”

“ Oh,—do tell ! Explain, sir ! ” she said, as eagerly as a child.

And all that first delightful day we spent on the Moor together that was her mood,—as joyous and light-hearted as a child out for a holiday.

It was difficult to believe that any sore trouble had ever touched her. Yet now, in the full light of day, when at times her face was in repose—which, indeed, was not often, for she was set on getting fullest enjoyment out of every minute of every hour and her face responded eloquently—I got the impression of past sorrows, bravely borne, and carried now with the lofty calm of a mind stayed on higher things.

She led me, with the springing step and supple grace her book had led me to expect, through seas of billowing green bracken, in which the newly-shorn sheep here and there looked like floating pearls, to Hound Tor. And there we sat long among the bristling rocks, talking books and men, and the wonders and glories of the Moor spread all below us.

She criticised my work with acute but kindly understanding, and boldly averred her belief that there was better stuff in me than had yet come out. And we discussed her book, which was all of her work that I knew as yet, and she promised to remedy that default forthwith by lending me others.

She told me much about her life and work among the outcast and criminal classes before she came to live on the Moor, and many quaint and touching stories about them. And never once did she refer, even remotely, to my own troublous case and delayed decision.

That was a mighty relief to me, and again I

recognised in it the supreme wisdom of a surely divinely-guided heart in its dealings with a sinner above most.

It was for me a full day of richest enjoyment—of such high joy, indeed, as my life had never hitherto even remotely glimpsed. And, judging by outward appearances, she also had found her pleasure in it.

She led me home over further moors, and through the woods whose serrated tops I had seen silhouetted against the sunset sky the night before, and so down the wide valley, and under the great Tors confronting Hamildown, whose names, she impressed upon me, were Honeybags and Chinkwell and Bell.

“You must learn your geography,” she laughed.

“You are sure you will know them again?”

“I shall never forget them,” I assured her.

“Nor Hound Tor. Will you take me one day to your own private Dream Tor? I have searched the map in vain for it.”

“You will not find it on the map. Perhaps one day I will take you there. It is not many I so favour.”

We parted at the bridge over the stream, as she forbade me to accompany her further; and I lingered long there after she had gone, to hear her voice still in the soft melodious ripple of the water against its hidden boulder.

As I mused, later on that night, over all the day's

doings, and recalled the charm of her talk and all her ways, I thanked God, as I think I had never thanked Him before in all my life,—with fervent meaning, for permitting me this brief glimpse of better things.

I slept that night as I had not slept for months,—nay, for years, and woke in the morning with a feeling of renewal—of renascence almost, and with a keen desire for more such days of uplift and enjoyment.

The two following days I was to spend by myself, as My Lady's time was to be fully occupied by literary and other work.

I knew, from her book, that she was a notable housewife and prided herself on it. Among other things, during our much talk—'great tell,' she called it—on Hound Tor, I learned that she did much of the household work herself, with the assistance of a man and his wife who lived in the neighbouring cottage. It was the wife who so cautiously appraised me that first night and finally admitted me as harmless.

And My Lady obviously enjoyed this mingling of occupations. She held that both her literary and her housework benefited by the constant change which prevented either from becoming mere routine, and in that I have no doubt she was right, as she was in most things.

I spent the day on Hound Tor again, doing much the same round as on the previous day, but sadly

lacked my companion and found myself very much poorer company.

I was, however, in much better condition, mentally and perhaps spiritually. I had had a sight of the better land in which a man may dwell if he will, and the craving for more, engendered by that first taste, was making for good in me.

Oh, the wisdom My Lady showed in leaving her little white seeds to root and shoot of their own accord !

On Hound Tor she sowed a fresh crop through the unconscious glimpses she gave me of what life on the higher plane might be. Little crystalline bits of self-revelation which shone in the darkness of my soul like stars in a black sky, and continued to ray forth hope and comfort unceasingly ;—particles of spiritual radium which pulsed a healthier life through all my being.

I felt myself getting the better of my demons. My white angels, headed and marshalled by My Lady, began at last to make some headway against the evil hordes that had ridden me so hard for nine long years.

On my way home I climbed to the top of Chinkwell, and lay there looking down over the valley, and found in the distance the brown thatched roofs of Heysham nestling snugly among their cushiony trees, like a set of broody hens in a meadow.

And I lay there looking at the brown roofs till

the sun went down, and I thought and thought. But now there was more of light in my thought than of darkness.

At night I went up to the little white chapel, for the confirmation of its peace and prayerfulness, and when My Lady stole softly in and had said her prayers, she shook me warmly by the hand, with a quiet searching look and a smile that showed me how glad she was to see me there.

THEREAFTER, in pursuance of My Lady's settled intention of plucking my soul out of its net of evil resolve and saving it alive, we had many Moor-walks, and climbed and sat and talked among most of the Tors within reach, and I came to know and love her countryside very dearly.

Rippon and Hey and Saddle, and Hamildown in all his mighty length and breadth, and Tunhill and Bonehill and Bell, and Chinkwell and Honeybags ; and the chequered paths and glades of Lizwell Woods, with the white-streaked amber Webburn rushing to wed the Dart ; and Dartmeet itself, over the Moor, past the Coffin-stone,—I came to know and love them all. And, though there were many days when her duties kept her at home, she was still ever with me even when I rambled among them alone.

And, from that very first night, she never once referred to my troubles nor pressed me to come to a decision.

In her uncommon wisdom—drawn, I doubt not, from her associates of the little white chapel—she quietly opened to me the brighter possible side of

life, and let the beauty and peace and satisfaction of it offer its own contrast to the shadows in which I lived. And no better means could she have devised for the cure of my sick soul. Urgency or argument might have provoked resistance. One does not for mere words readily surrender the cherished ideas of nine black years, even though they be venomous as adders. Nay—maybe therefore one clings to them the more tightly.

She was wise beyond most, and though she never asked or argued, each time we met, the calm gray eyes sought hopefully for sign of what was working in me, and often I caught them resting wistfully on me when I had not been aware of it. That she spent much time on her knees on my behalf I was certain, and I thanked her gratefully in my heart and let it turn to her, and to all that she represented to me of goodness and hope, as fully as she could have wished.

Then one never-to-be-forgotten day she said quietly :

“ I am going to take you to Dream Tor to-day.”

And I answered, “ It is what I have been hoping for.”

For I knew that that meant much to her, and for me it was the seal and confirmation of our friendship.

She was more silent than usual as we climbed up and up through seas of waving bracken, and when at last we reached the summit of the little Tor

unmarked on any map, we still sat long without speaking. She, gazing quietly—a little sadly, I thought—at the wonderful view spread all around us ; I, too full of gladness for speech.

It was one of those wonder-days of quick-traveling cloud across a deep-blue sunny sky, with sudden glooms and sprinkles of rain, which bring out all the witcheries of the Moor to perfection. The distant Tors were emeralds and amethysts in turn, the far-away lower lands shone in the sun like strips of opal, and every shower blazoned the Moor with sparkling dust of diamonds.

She roused herself at last and pointed out what was to be seen,—Teignmouth, with its blue bay and silver river, and the dim coast-line beyond Dartmouth,—all the friendly Tors I had come to know so well.

Then, as we watched, “the sunlight fell upon a glittering palace far in the west, a crystal palace, obviously peopled by fair ladies and gallant knights,”—the very words of her book came back to me as I recognised it, with a crinkle of discomfort, as Princetown and the Prison.

She had been watching me. Her friendly hand reached out to me and she asked quietly :

“ Well ? ”

And I bent and kissed the saving hand that had lifted me out of the mire—the first woman’s hand I had ever kissed in my life, save Honor’s, as she died.

"It is ended. I am your man."

"No !—God's."

"And yours. For you have saved my soul alive."

"Thank God !" she said fervently ; and we sat on in a great and wonderful silence, looking out over a new earth—towards a new heaven.

"I was heading straight for the gallows," I said haltingly at last. My tongue always tripped when I was stirred to the depths and generally kept me silent. "I was surely going straight to hell, and you have lifted me up to heaven. I can't tell you——"

"You don't need to. I know. Do you know why this is the favourite of all my Tors ?"

"No,—unless it is that you see most of your others from it."

"It is because I could see *that*," she nodded towards the passing vision of the Prison.

"You see," she explained, in answer to my surprised stare, "the chapel in the prison was at that time the only place within sight where the Sacramental Presence dwelt. And I loved to come and sit up here and feast my soul upon it even in the distance. And always I prayed for the troubled souls within the walls."

"And I, for one, felt your prayers, though I did not know what it was that called to me. It was like a living cry from the Moor, and it fought in me against my evil will. It gave me many a sleepless night and many a troubled day."

“Thank God ! . . . He is very wonderful,” and we dropped into silence again.

“That is surely Bellever,” I said at last, as my eyes kept returning to the lordly triangular hill which lay, gleaming and glooming in the sweeps of sunburst and shadow, directly between us and the Prison.

“Yes,”—so softly that I barely caught it.

“Will you one day take me to Bellever ? It has meant so very much to me. . . . It used to call to me from my prison window. It and you ! It was the first step to this. . . . It would feel to me like the capstone of this bridge you have built for me to better things. Will you ? ”

And with that simple asking I, all unconsciously, tapped deep hidden floods of which I had not dreamed. For as I turned, at her silence, and looked at her,—

“No,” she said, very softly,—very sadly. “I shall never go to Bellever again save with one man, . . . and it is not likely now that I shall ever go with him.”

“I am sorry,” I began, and remembered suddenly the pregnant references to Bellever in her book. And we fell silent again.

Then, perhaps thinking her refusal might have hurt me, she said quietly, almost as though thinking aloud :

“I loved him, you see, with all my heart and soul.

And he, me. . . . It was on Bellever that he told me, and earth was transformed into heaven for me. . . . I had won the heart of the one man in the world whose love I had desired more than anything on earth. . . . And then . . . after that first rapture of our opened hearts . . . as we came home, he was unusually silent. . . . He knelt with me in the chapel in the evening and then—there, in my little holy of holies, he broke my heart. . . .”

She spoke very softly,—very sadly, with a sob in her voice.

“Don’t recall it,” I begged. “It is hurting you. I had no idea——”

“It will do me good, because you will understand,” she said bravely. “. . . The baring of our hearts had come upon us almost unconsciously, but before he would let me love him he insisted on telling me all about himself—his past. It was noble of him . . . but it broke my heart. . . . I had never dreamed of such things in connection with him. . . . He had everything—birth, position, a great name—and—that! Oh, it was terrible! I was aghast,—stunned,—blinded,—broken. My heart died within me, literally, truly. The physical heart went on with its work—in a kind of a way. But the heart that is really me felt truly dead. I recognised the nobility of spirit which had forced him to tell me, but—oh, the horror of it! . . . And

I knew that I loved him the more for his telling. . . . The sinner was dearer to me than ever. . . . I love all sinners for his sake. . . . But the sin ! . . . I begged him to leave me—there—alone with God. . . . He was loth to go. He saw how mortally it had wounded me. But I insisted, and he went. He had your rooms at the inn. . . . And then I suppose I must have fainted, though I am not given to fainting. Long afterwards I found myself lying prone before the altar, with the red lamp shining up above like a clot of Christ's blood. How long I had been there I do not know. I was like a broken bird,—no song in my heart, no strength in my wings, no vision, no voice, just a bundle of bruised flesh. I was void of hope,—anxious only to die and have done with it all. Life had no longer any savour for me. . . . Truly, it seemed to me that my life was ebbing out at every pore. I grew weaker and weaker. . . . And I was content. . . . Better, it seemed to me then, to go quietly out. For I could not imagine life without him, yet life with him, in the light—the shadow—of this knowledge would be agony, because the gulf between us was so wide. He was a great sinner, a sinner above most. I had thought him on my plane and he was far below me. But, indeed, he was a splendid sinner, and I loved him more than ever——”

“I cannot understand that,” I said amazedly.

‘I hate his sin with every drop of pure womanli-

ness that is in me. But the sinner I cannot help loving still. Does that surprise you ? ”

“ I simply cannot understand it,” I shook my head.

“ You will sometime. . . . His sin crushed me, trod me in the mire. If he had trampled on me with his feet I could not have felt more bruised and soiled and broken . . . yet I loved him. . . . I prayed with all my poor heart that God would accept my life as a sacrifice for him,—my life for his—as a propitiation for his sinfulness. . . . ”

She fell silent again, and sat gazing sadly at Bellever which had meant so much to her, and her face was white and set like a fair marble statue’s.

I felt for her hand and kissed it again reverently. Words would have been intrusive and meaningless. Silent expression of my own deep feeling was all I could offer. And presently she continued :

“ As I lay there before the altar I really believed that God had accepted the sacrifice I offered, and that I was dying. I grew weaker and weaker. My life was oozing out fast. . . . Then suddenly a voice spoke to me—in my heart perhaps, but it seemed to me an actual living voice, the living voice of the living Christ. And He said to me, ‘ My child, you suffer for his sin even as I suffered for the sin of the whole world. I accept the propitiation you offer, but I have work for you to do in the world, and you must live. He shall be saved for you in heaven. There the remembrance of his sin

shall be blotted out, but not the sense of forgiveness. I accept your life for him, but it must be life, not death. You must go on living.' The voice was so very real, and the promise so wonderful, that life seemed suddenly to come back to me. I had something to live for. My heart began to beat strong and full again. I could feel the new warm life-blood rushing through my veins. I got up and went into the house, and had a hot bath and a glass of wine, and went to bed. And in the morning I took up my life again. But it was life on a broken wing, and the full white joy of living was gone. Since then I have lived only to make atonement for his sins and to win him back to better things. I offer every prayer, every action, every thought,—yes, even every breath and my very heart-beats for him ; and I ask God to let all my suffering be for him, and if I am in any way to blame, if I in any way failed him, to punish me after my death in Purgatory, so that all my agony in this life may be expiation for his sins, not for my own."

"You never failed him. Of that I am sure. . . . You have done mighty good in the world. You have saved many by your prayers, I do not doubt. You certainly saved me."

"Yes. . . . Thank God for that ! He has done that with me before. I have prayed for one thing and He has given me another. Sometime—when He sees it well—He will give me that other also."

“ You have prayed for me, I know. I have felt it.”

“ Oh, I have. I asked Him to give you to me as a pledge of His promise about the other. And He has done, you see. He never neglects, and He never forgets.”

“ And that other?—now? Is he still . . . wounding you? ”

She did not answer at once. I feared I had asked too much—that the wound was still too sore.

But presently she said, in a sadder voice than I had ever heard from her, “ I have no means of knowing. We are at grievous odds. For a year and more he has answered none of my letters, nor have I had any word from him—not directly from him. I heard he was spreading some ill report about me——”

“ Good God! But that’s too monstrous! The man must be a perfect brute——”

“ Oh don’t! ” she said quickly, laying a hand on my arm. “ You hurt me.”

“ I’m sorry; but, all the same——”

“ You see, I love him dearly still—in spite of it all. And this has nearly broken my heart again. Something, or someone, has come between us. I do not know what. But the result is this dead wall of silence which I cannot penetrate.”

“ If you will tell me who he is I’ll promise you to get through it and tell him anything you like.”

“ I am sure you would do that for me. . . . But

I cannot tell you who he is. You see, it is not just my secret. If his past life became known he would be outcast. He would lose everything. Sometimes I have wondered if that might not be God's best for him. It is when we are broken that we come nearest to Him. . . . I do not know. But I desire only his good. In my short sight I would not have any harm come to him."

"And in spite of all he has done, you still care for him?"

"Care for him?—I love him with every fibre of my heart, with every drop of my blood."

"That is beyond me," I said, shaking my head. "You are very wonderful——"

"I see nothing wonderful in it. I love him. That is all."

"In spite of the way he has acted! That is the wonderful thing to me. I have never been in love myself, but I don't think I could love anyone who made no return. And to love on even when the return is an ill one!——" I shook my head. It was, as I said, quite beyond me.

"You know nothing about it,—as you confess. Real love loves and looks for no return;—loves because it cannot help itself. If your idea of love were the right one it would be a poor look-out for us all."

"How do you mean?"

"If God only loved those who made Him proper

return, what would become of us all ? That is the very highest love of course. But the essence of all true love is that it loves on and on in spite of neglect or even of rebuffs, and expects nothing in return. I had an old friend who lived—all alone, as you would have said,—in a little stone hut away in the very heart of the Moor, and died there at last, without a soul to close his eyes——”

“ Preacher John ! ”

“ Yes—I was forgetting you had met him in my book. Well,—that was his Credo,—unceasing love without return. ‘ Love, dost thou *ever* fail ? ’ was one of his sayings. And ‘ Love on ! Love on ! Love on ! ’ . . . Love that needs return is only a higher form of cupboard-love. . . . ‘ Hoping ever, failing never ; though deceived, believing still.’ That is true love.

‘ And never, never, never Love complains
That its sweet wealth is too much drawn upon ;
But gives, and gives, and gives till life is gone,
And then, through all Eternity, gives on and on.’ ”

“ Perhaps sometime I shall come to understand even that. You are opening new doors and windows to my soul all round.”

“ I am glad,” she said warmly. “ You have starved all your life. The royal feast is spread for you. You have only to go in and eat. . . . And what an appetite you’ll have after that long fast ! ”

And in her joy at thought of what lay before me—thanks to her good help!—she brightened up somewhat, and cast her own sorrows behind her as far as could be, and was her own sweet self again.

But this grievous thing she had told me remained with me, and weighed upon me, and I thought much upon it, then and thereafter.

SOME day, some enquiring archæologist, delving about Dream Tor, may come upon a rusted Browning pistol, buried deep under the turf of the eastern slope, and from it may formulate new theories as to the weapons used by the original inhabitants of Dartmoor.

We buried it there one day, My Lady and I, with due ceremony, as proof and token of my redemption. And when I had carefully refitted the sod and stamped it down, she knelt on the place and said a prayer of thanksgiving, and then crossed herself and was happy for the rest of the day.

It was very marvellous to me, knowing now what a corroding sorrow she carried in her heart, that she could find any joy in life whatever. But joyousness, so far as she could compass it, was of the very essence of her Credo of love, and as yet I had not discovered—and could barely imagine—any bounds to the strength and exercise of her will as regards herself.

That one occasion on Dream Tor, when, in the exaltation of the moment, she showed me a little bit of her heart and the great sorrow of her life, was the only glimpse I had had of that carefully-sub-

jected side of her. At all other times she was the calm, self-possessed, graciously sympathetic Lady of the Book, who accorded my intrusive stranger-self so kindly a welcome that first evening.

And, from watching her often at her prayers in her little white chapel, I came to understand, to some extent at all events, the heights and depths and strength of the soul that shone out of the frank gray eyes. And I came to appreciate, if as yet I did not very fully comprehend it all, the source from which her extraordinary power was drawn.

Born and bred as I had been, it was natural for me, I suppose, to feel considerable doubt as to the practices and beliefs of the Roman Church. Indeed I might be said to have imbibed an aversion for it with my mother's milk.

But, sitting there, day after day,—for when the days were bad, or no special outing was possible, I got into the way of betaking myself and my work to the little chapel as a matter of course, since there one could sit and think as nowhere else ;—and watching the fervour and intensity of My Lady's devotions, my views on all such matters underwent very radical change. And the change—from narrowness and nothing—could not but be for the better.

I wrote much of these notes in that little white House of Prayer, and I remember, the first time she caught me at work there, I was doubtful if it would be pleasing to her. But only for the moment.

When she rose and turned to me I saw by the smile on her face that it was all right.

“That is good,” she said. “The better the place, the better the work! I often bring my own work here—even my darning. And I believe I darn better here than anywhere else. And as each of my books comes out I bring it here to show it to Him, and to My Lady, and my dear S. Michael. They all know and love me, and are interested in all I do. They enjoy it, I’m sure, as well as I do. And I bring my dearest letters; and always on my birthday all my presents to show to them and thank them for them. Don’t you think they like it?” she smiled challengingly.

“Whoever helps you—or has been helped by you—must rejoice in all you do. I certainly find the white peace . . . and the prayerful atmosphere very comforting.”

“The more you come to understand, the more so you will find it. A man once said to me here that I seemed to make a trade of prayer. I would have said profession myself. But he meant well and he spoke truly. I believe implicitly in prayer, and nobody in this world ever had better reason. I talk to God about everything in my life, and in the lives of my friends . . . and others. . . . We are on the very best of terms. I have even been foolishly angry with Him and told Him what I thought about Him, and sometimes I joke with Him,”—she saw and

enjoyed the amazement in my face, and added, "You see, I feel towards Him just as I would towards my own father if he were alive. And I treat Him just the same. And He loves it."

"I'm sure He must," I said, but none the less I marvelled—at my own narrowness of outlook in such matters and at her amazing breadth and faith.

After that day on Dream Tor she had set herself at once to get me to work,—lest, as she put it, the seven devils should find an empty house and come in and occupy it, and I should find myself 'On the Embankment' again.

That phrase 'On the Embankment'—derived no doubt from her work among the outcasts in London—was often on her lips. It expressed volumes, and she had a profound belief that no writer ever did his best work until he had been 'on the Embankment,'—that until he had sounded the depths he could neither appreciate nor attain to the heights.

'To come in off the Embankment' was, to her, to turn from a broken and troubled past to brighter and better and more hopeful things. Her prayers, and her own conscious and unconscious influence, had delivered me from worse even than the Embankment,—from certain death on the gallows—and had set my feet on climbing-paths.

She was frankly proud of, and fittingly grateful for, this good work she had been permitted to do, and she regarded me, quite naturally, as exceptional

treasure-trove for herself and the Higher Powers whose handmaid she was.

There was a good deal of the motherly—of what I imagine the Virgin-Motherly feeling might be—in her attitude towards me, I know, though in actual years I was somewhat her senior. But in knowledge and experience of things spiritual I was indeed hardly yet born.

As to my feeling for her I hesitate at the attempt to express it. None but a man who had gone through experiences as soul-racking as I had could possibly fathom it to the full. No woman could, for no woman can feel quite towards another woman, not even towards the very best of women, as a man could,—as I did.

To say that at any moment I would have given my life, joyfully and unhesitatingly, to save her from reproach or harm is merest platitude. I worshipped her, reverently, even as she worshipped her Higher Powers, but with far less fearlessness and intimacy of approach. She was as sacred to me as were to her the Divine Elements in the little white silk-curtained Tabernacle on the altar in her tiny House of Prayer.

Twice I was permitted, from my far-corner seat on the 'externe's' back bench, to hear her answering the celebrant, robed in her virginal white veil and an aura of fervent spiritual enthusiasm which stirred me profoundly.

She was, I believe,—and is—the only woman permitted to safeguard the Blessed Sacrament, single-handed and unaided. And she prized that privilege more than life itself. I am quite sure she would have chosen to die rather than lose the high and unique position she held, as the Lady of the Eucharist, the Lady of the Lamp.

And that it was that had wounded her so mortally in the slanders spread about her by the man she loved so dearly. They endangered the position which was more than her life to her, for such privileges rested on her stainless reputation. But, concerning that she told me more later.

One night she came to her prayers in the little chapel dressed in the Madonna-blue gown with much lace about it, as on that second night. And it seemed to me that her devotions were longer and even more fervent than usual. When at last she rose and turned and spoke to me, she asked :

“ You remember dear old Father Dominic, whom you met in Switzerland ? ”

“ Very well.”

“ I have just received news of his death.”

“ I am sorry. He was a good old man, I’m sure.”

“ I am glad, as glad almost as he is. I have been rejoicing with him. And yet I am sad at my own loss in him. I shall miss him terribly. He was the very best friend I ever had. He is—he was—the

only man who knew the whole of the matter between myself and Lancelot——”

(“ I think of him as Lancelot,” she had said to me one day, when speaking of that other. “ I had believed him Galahad and he proved to be but the other.” And it was as Lancelot that she always referred to him.)

“ You see,” she continued, “ when I heard of the evil reports he was spreading about me, I had to do something. He was attacking my reputation, and upon that my whole life here depends. I am not only a private individual. I have an official position in my Church. I owe the preservation of my fair name as a duty to my ecclesiastical superiors. For my own sake, I should have done nothing. For their sake, honour demanded it. But you can imagine—no, you cannot, because you cannot possibly understand my love for him still. And—to have to lay bare my heart, and the whole of that sad matter, even to my dear Father Dominic—oh, it was grievous to me beyond the telling ! And Father Dominic deemed it advisable to take legal action up to a certain point. I hoped that if he and the lawyer saw Lancelot, and reasoned with him, and showed him the view they, as outsiders, took of it all, it might suffice. But it did not, and I am afraid it all resulted only in estranging us still more. But his slanders ceased, and it is more than a year now since I heard anything of him except through

the papers. And now my dear Father Dominic is gone and I feel bereft."

"And you still feel as you did towards the other?" I asked; for, though I was beginning to get some understanding of such vast possibilities, through my own feeling towards herself, this yet transcended by much the heights and depths of my slow attainment.

"Of course! I do not change. I shall love him till we both die—and better still after, for then we shall both understand."

I shook my head. "I have tried my best, but I cannot help looking on it as a grievous waste——"

"Waste!" she caught me up. "Waste! There is no such thing as waste in love. Love grows on giving. Oh, you have much to learn, Ian Carril."

"I'm afraid I have. You see, until now I have had so little opportunity——"

"No, you poor thing! . . . But you *are* learning."

"Yes, I am learning—more than I ever thought to know."

And so—to say that I was very deeply in love with her myself is merest fustian. I had, as I have said, come to regard her with something at all events of that absolute love and reverence and devotion which she herself bore towards her Higher Powers.

All the stifled capacities for loving denied me by my lost years sprang now to fullest growth, with all

the fire of those lost years compressed and ablaze in them.

I think she must have known it, though I did my best to keep it hidden in my heart. But she was a keen observer and very little escaped her. The full of it, however, she will know when she reads these notes, and it is joy to my heart to set it forth here as plainly as it is possible for me to do.

But my love for her was heights above the feeling—even the most impassioned—that commonly goes by that name. For I could expect, and looked for, no return whatever in kind. Her heart, I knew, was given entirely to this man who valued it as less than nothing ;—amazing thought ! And—she had repaid me in advance for my uttermost devotion by lifting me out of hell when I had wellnigh slipped in for ever.

It was through this mighty white fire of my passionate devotion to her that I came by degrees to apprehend—dimly at first, but more and more clearly once the spark was lighted—something of the wonder of the love of God ;—through that, and the observation of her at her prayers, and the knowledge of the implicit confidence with which she offered them, and of her unceasing and unchanging love for the man who had so wounded her.

All these wrought mightily in me. They broke down and cast out for ever that unsatisfying crust of, at best, non-denial of better things which had

been all I could claim even before my imprisonment.

While in prison, as you know, I fought with all my might against every possible tendency to good lest it should weaken my resolve for evil. But now—by reason of my great love for her, and her still greater love for Lancelot, I came to glimpse the love of God Himself.

If I could so love—to the very last possibility of self-sacrifice ; if she could so love, in equal degree one who scorned and would have none of her, and could yet retain her undying faith ;—yes, I was forced to the consideration of what God's love for man might be. And finally I came to the realisation of what it was.

Not by any means for the first time, I am sure, human love had led to the divine.

She knew all that was working in me, and rejoiced greatly at it. But never in any slightest way did she attempt to lead me into her own communion. Doubtless she would have rejoiced still more had I so decided, but it was enough for her that I had come in off the Embankment to the inner light and warmth of home. And the knowledge that it was so, and that it was her hand that had led me, added to her happiness, I know.

CIRCUMSTANCED as I was, it mattered little to me where I lived, except that to me—as was surely but natural—there was no place in the world to be compared with Graystone.

Thanks to my poor Honor, and Denver's careful stewardship, I was fairly well off. I had £700 a year from sound investments. I did not even need to write unless I chose to do so. But choose I did—and so did My Lady for me.

Greater comfort than I found at the little inn I could not possibly have had. The landlord had evidently been a gentleman's gentleman. He delighted in valeting me, and indeed fathered me like a prodigal son.

Often, as I lay in bed in the morning,—when he came in to take away my things to brush, and brought them back immaculately folded, and turned my socks half inside out ready to put on, and arranged all my other garments in exactly the right order, and then cheerfully announced that my bath was ready,—I smiled inwardly at thought of what his face would be like if he knew that the recipient of all these kindly attentions had had, not so very

long ago, to jump up at sound of the prison bell and scrub out his own cell in Dartmoor Prison.

After all, it might not have altered him, unless in the direction of still greater attention to make up for past discomforts, for he was a genuinely gentlemanly man, and he never had a prompter paying guest, and we were on the best of terms.

So, week after week, I stayed on there, and had no desire to go further and fare worse.

My many wanderings and varied experience of men and places had given me matter enough to draw upon ; and expression, such as it was, I delighted in. My difficulty was to settle on what to do first. And therein My Lady's acumen was of service. We settled the lines of a story, and I started once more—after the lapse of nine years—on my first book. It was a very different one from the other.

And My Lady, too, rejoiced in this visible outcome of her good work and ever gave me heartiest cheer and encouragement.

Her own books brought her an enormous correspondence. Men and women all over the world seemed to find in them thoughts and suggestions which led them to confide in the writer and ask her advice and assistance. They were mostly troubled men and women, and none, I knew, ever went empty away.

Occasionally, religiously suppressing names and places, she would consult me on points about which

I might supposably know more than herself. And I was not infrequently astonished at the openness with which these burden-bearers would disclose their troubles to an entire stranger, simply because some thought or word in one or other of her books led them to—as it turned out—a well-founded confidence in her sympathy and wisdom.

It gave me a new and larger belief in the dignity and importance of the profession of letters, and an insight into the loneliness of circumstance which could prompt such strange yearning after outside assistance in the solution of life's knotty problems.

This wide correspondence, of which she was the gracious centre, together with her multitudinous household duties, might well have occupied all her time, one would have thought, and left her none for her own literary work.

But she was an amazingly quick worker. She wrote just as she spoke, eloquently and never at a loss for just the right word. When I read her books it was as though I listened to her talking—but that I missed the fluty tones which were a delight to listen to. And she, for her part, could not understand, except sympathetically and always with amusement, the considered plodding which was my part as a writer.

I saw her pretty nearly every day ; if not during the day, then in the evening, when I slipped into the chapel just before her stated hour for prayer.

And many a heartfelt prayer I prayed there myself, in the rays of the little red lamp, in gratitude for the changed outlook my coming there had brought me. And when she came noiselessly in and knelt in her own place, I thanked God again for all she had done for me, and joined my crude petitions to hers for whatsoever things she might be asking.

It was a joy and an inspiration simply to watch her, and I do not think I ever once missed her evening hour.

When the nights were wet and the lane muddy she would, on rising, humorously accuse me of soiling her white sanctuary, but her strictures were so smilingly given that they did not hurt nor ever keep me from offending again.

Three solid months of steady toil, however, saw my book finished, and I considered that very quick work. But I had been full of my subject and it had run its course joyously. My Lady, when she read it, was good enough to express the opinion that it was not bad for a beginner and might even sell. "One never knows," she said hopefully.

I went up to London with it, carrying letters from herself to one or two of her own publishers, and with that assistance I got the matter arranged with no great difficulty.

It was atrocious weather, and I also got a chill which resulted in a severe attack of influenza, which

laid me up for many weeks. Possibly it was the sudden change from the sweet keen air of the Moor to the germ-laden London streets that bowled me out.

I longed to be back in the care of my good old landlord of the inn at Graystone. To have lain there, looking out on the huge sprawling bulk of Hamildown, even though he were draped with rain-clouds and mist, would have been a vastly different thing from my melancholy musings on the roofs and chimney-pots of the British Museum, and would have tended to speedier convalescence.

I had taken a room in a semi-private hotel in Great Russell Street, and they were as kind to the sick stranger as their many preoccupations permitted ; but I longed for Dartmoor and the homely kindness of Devonshire hearts and the lilt of the Devon tongue.

Denver came in now and again to see me after business hours, and he was my only visitor.

I wrote often to My Lady, and she, amid all her other more exigent duties, never failed to reply. Her letters were veritable gleams of Dartmoor sunshine and breaths of Dartmoor air. They were compact of her own hopeful cheer and ministered mightily to me.

And as I lay thinking much of all she had done for me, and that what-might-have-been if she had not, there came to me an overpowering craving to

serve her even as she had served me. She had drawn me out of the pit. Could I not do as much for her? She had set my feet on the ladder of Hope. Could I not possibly set hers on the Mount of Joy?

Then, one day, I got from her a letter quivering with anticipation,—joy, hope, and a little fear were all apparent in it to me.

She told me her duties called her for a day or two to one of the western cities, and she had heard that Lancelot was almost certain to be there at the same time, and indeed in the same circles. Their paths were sure to cross, and she intended to make an opportunity for a personal plea for better understanding and possible reconciliation.

She was preparing herself for what could not but be a very trying ordeal, by long hours of prayer and meditation in her little chapel, and, though she could not but dread the thought of it somewhat, she was still looking forward to the meeting with eager hopefulness.

Her letter drove my temperature up. I was in fact in a fever of anxiety.

I knew all that this must mean to her. I dreaded to think what it might mean if that other still proved obdurate.

But could any man resist My Lady's pleading? Surely it would take a heart of adamant to hold out against the appeal of those wistful gray eyes and all that dwelt behind them.

If I had only known the man and what manner of man he was in other matters ! If only I had even seen him, or even his portrait, so that I might be able to judge of him for myself !

On the spur of that I wrote feverishly to My Lady, asking her if she would not so far unlock her secret, which she guarded so jealously for his sake, as to send me his portrait at least, for the easement of my mind. And I pledged myself that no other should see it, and that if I recognised it that knowledge should be buried in my own heart.

I reminded her that I had some skill in physiognomy. I hoped to find in his face some auspice of hope for them both.

She had left Graystone, however, before my letter reached her, and I lay awaiting her further news in greatest anxiety.

Three days later her letter came, and it racked my heart for her, for in the broken sentences I could read all that she had not permitted herself to say. It is too sacred to reproduce in its entirety. She told me briefly that they had met—in public first, and his perfect bearing towards her had misled her to hope. Then she had approached him in private and he had repelled her with scorn and contempt. She ended,—“—My heart bleeds with this new anguish. I feel crushed and broken and trampled in the mire again. And I have done nothing to deserve it—nothing. Oh, how could he?—how

could he ? . . . But I love him still. Yes, I love him, and will do though I die."

I was filled, as I read, with such a fury of indignation against that man that Denver, who happened to look in on me in the evening, was startled by the state I had got into.

It relieved his anxiety somewhat to learn that my righteous anger was not this time on my own account, but he told me plainly that, no matter why or for whom, I was in no condition to permit myself any such outbursts, that no doctor would be responsible for so headstrong and self-willed a patient, and that a recurrence, in my lowered condition, might have serious consequences.

I promised to curb myself to the best of my power. It would have been some relief to discuss the matter with him, for his cool, clear judgment rarely failed to discover some hope of improvement in the very worst extremities.

But this was too sacred and intimate a matter, and I doubt if even his wide experience could have suggested any remedy. A broken heart is beyond man's healing. But that I knew so well what deep hidden springs and vast high resources My Lady had to draw upon, I should have been in despair on her account.

The only spark of comfort I found in the whole matter was that her letter was dated from Heysham. She was at all events back among her own happy

surroundings, and would be seeking consolation and peace in her own little sanctuary where she had never so far failed to find them.

That certainty calmed me somewhat. I did my best to keep my thoughts off the man who could treat her so, and to fix them rather on that wonderful great love of hers which lived on in spite of every ill-treatment. And that sweet thought of her lifted me somewhat out of myself, and gave me fresh vision of the still Greater Love on which her own was based.

I could not bring myself to believe that so deep and fervent an emotion would be permitted to spend itself in vain. Sooner or later that other, on whom she lavished it so unstintedly, would awake to an understanding of it,—then, if I knew anything of man, it would be his heart that would break at thought of all the anguish he had caused her.

From all this, the desire to learn what manner of man he was became overpowering in me. He was presumably human, though his conduct was devilish. More than ever I desired to see him and study him. For it was in my heart that by so doing I might possibly arrive at some way of helping them both.

Never once, up to this time, I am thankful to say, had it entered my head that if the breach between them became permanent, she might, when the wound had had time to heal, turn to myself. And yet the thought would have been natural enough.

For she knew all my heart concerning her and she trusted me wholly.

My only desire was for her fullest happiness, and to that I bent such energy as was left me.

I replied to her letter as best I could. It was very inadequate. But she would read between the lines and understand. And again I urged her to send me some portrait that I might form my own judgment of the man.

And, in the desolation and upsetting of her heart, she did so.

Two days later came a registered packet from her, and when I had eagerly torn it open I found inside the box a small miniature, beautifully finished, life-like.

And when I looked—my heart kicked so violently that it shook my very senses, and then it seemed to stop and lose many beats, and the miniature dropped from my still-weak fingers on to the coverlet.

It was the face of the man whose life I had been craving all these years, until God and My Lady delivered him from me ;—the man who had broken my poor Honor and cast her to the void ;—and this was the man—amazing thought !—whom My Lady loved with all her pure soul, and would do though she died !

It took me a long, long time to recover any reasonableness of connected thought about it all. It seemed altogether too utterly monstrous,—of

contrivance too diabolical for mere human device,—one of those tangles of fate in which the gods of old loved to disport themselves with mortals as their helpless pawns.

It was long before I could bring myself to look again at that hated face. But I strung myself to it at last and examined it carefully.

And in spite of myself, and my detestation of the man, and my now added knowledge of his actual character—of which the world which honoured him knew nothing,—I had to confess to myself that it was a fine face,—well-featured, strong, commanding, and full of highest intelligence,—the face of a man born to make a mark in the world. The expression too, as portrayed by the artist, was distinctly pleasing, or at all events conveyed, in some subtle fashion, the suggestion that he could when he chose be very winning, possibly fascinating. It was difficult, impossible almost, to reconcile it all with the soul of dust and ashes and all uncleanness that dwelt within.

I studied it long, stirring myself to still intenser scrutiny by saying to myself at times,—“This is the man I tried to kill! . . . This is the man My Lady loves, and would love though he slew her!”

And ever my amazement grew,—at the whole untoward matter,—at the inexplicable divergence between presentment and fact,—and at the wonder

of that great love which My Lady bore for one so unworthy of her.

(Only when she reads this—if ever she does—will she know all the facts of the matter. She had suffered enough and I could not add to her sorrow by one word against the man she honoured with her love. And so I never told her. Now, it does not matter.)

I RETURNED the miniature in due course with my grateful thanks, but no more than casual comment on the strength and intelligence and attractiveness of the face. Whether My Lady suspected me of concealing my true thought, or set me down as but a superficial physiognomist, I could not say. In her letters she never referred to the matter.

But as I lay, limp and spent with the fever, it was borne in upon me that here, right to my hand, lay my next work in life,—to see this man, to force him to listen, and to make clear to him, in such way that he could never forget it, the nobility of My Lady's devoted love for him, and the monstrous wrong he had done in ever admitting one shadow of doubt concerning her into his dark mind.

I had not known he was home, for since I renounced the idea of killing him I had done my best to drop him completely out of my mind.

But now he had once more become the object of primal interest to me. I did my best to follow his movements in the daily papers and laid my plans again for getting at him. Now—for his possible

salvation. Before, it had always been for his destruction.

As I lay, I tried to think it all out,—all I would do and say when the opportunity came, and I passed the long slow hours conning it all as a barrister prepares his brief, to drive conviction home with a force that should be irresistible.

I saw plainly enough that direct approach to him, such as I had successfully made before, would be inadvisable if not impossible. For, if I should be recognised before I reached him, my plans would simply land me in prison once more, and my reasons for seeking him would be laughed to scorn.

It must obviously be a case of trusting to Providence to provide the opportunity. And my faith in Providence had grown through the watching of My Lady at her prayers.

Surely, I said to myself, if ever man was justified in hoping for the assistance of the Higher Powers, I should be in this matter. For it was not my own good I sought, but My Lady's.

And then, whenever I got that far, would come the inevitable and insistent question,—Will this make for her lasting good and happiness? . . . Can the winning of such a man be fit crown for her fair life?

And that tormented me. For to my own heart—and still more to my intelligence—that issue commended itself not at all.

If ever woman deserved the very best that life could give her, that, and not one iota less than that, was My Lady's rightful due.

And was this man the very best? . . . So very much the reverse was he that I, not unreasonably, began to waver and doubt.

We mortals are purblind at best. We cannot even see the complete ends of our own noses. And how should we dare to attempt the direction of lives—our own or others'? Would it not be wisest and safest to leave it to the All-Wise up above? By working on my own short-sighted lines, even with the most unselfish ends in view, might I not, after all, be but precipitating catastrophe?

It had, all along, been difficult for me to appreciate properly—or perhaps I should say to understand properly—My Lady's unchanging, unwearying love for so ignoble a soul, and I do not think that in that I had been biassed by any personal considerations.

But now, with my added knowledge of that other man's personality and true character, and the certainty in my own mind that such as he could never by any possibility be fit mate for such an one as My Lady,—being myself but human, I began to have fleeting visions and to dream impossible dreams, through which My Lady floated like a fair white saint with starry eyes, and at times even came down to earth and was a very woman,—The One Woman in the world.

But all such jewelled fancies, though they might dance before me in the night, vanished with the light of day. Sober sense told me that crown such as that was not for broken life such as mine, and I rigorously ruled such vain imaginings out of my book of life.

But as I lay, with nothing to do but think—and brood over the whole matter, in the light of this later revelation of the character of the man to whom her heart had been given, by whom it had been so grievously wounded, doubts and hopes crowded thick upon me.

Happiness, I assured myself, could not possibly come to her through such a man,—impossible ! impossible !

Can Light wed with Darkness ?—Good with Evil ?—Purity with Sin ? The thought revolted me.

It was her happiness I desired above every other thing, and this could not possibly make for it. She would only make shipwreck of her life. How could I, desiring for her the best, assist her to what I believed the worst ?

I could not, and—finally—after long wrestling with the matter—I would not.

When at last, through whirling clouds of doubt, I came to that decision, I began to mend rapidly. For back of all my thinking, unadmitted but none the less there and charged with life, glimmered the dreams and visions that I had done my best to

make an end of. Unconsciously they set new hope in my heart, and that, reacting on my body, made for healing.

My Lady, on hearing of my condition, wrote regularly two or three times a week. Her letters were as pearls of great price to me and I read them almost to rags.

She wrote always cheerfully—for my enlivenment, I quite understood, since she knew so well, from her own experiences, the despondency of sickness, whether of heart or body, among strangers. But I knew her too well to suppose that her own great sorrow was in any way abated. She would half live her life in the shadow of it until she died—unless . . .

And it seemed a marvellous pity that so fair a life should droop on till its end.

Then, for further diversion, the proofs of my book began coming in, and never were proofs so carefully read, and re-read, and read again. I pondered even commas to improvident lengths. I could hardly bear to let the proofs go back.

But they cheered me greatly. I had put good work into the book and thought well of it even in manuscript. Now, in actual type, it seemed to me better still, even though I was quite aware that judgment of one's own work is always fallible and generally useless and misleading. I began to plume myself on achievement. The future took on a rosier hue.

Out of my glimmering dreams and visions I began to build castles-in-the-air.

She had been gracious to me beyond the telling. She had found me in my bitter need. She had taken pity on me. And pity is akin to love. She had saved my soul alive. She had shown herself an angel of goodness.

She had by this time surely appraised that other at his true worth. Her eyes must undoubtedly be opened to his utter inadequacy at last. If he had turned to her—soiled and stained though he was . . . But he flouted and scorned her. He broke her heart afresh. And, though she vowed she loved him still and would do till she died—it was not credible, it was not possible, for love to survive under such conditions.

So it seemed to me.

And for myself.—She knew the worst there was to know. And the best, thanks solely to her, lay on in front. She loved sinners—or she could not have gone on loving that other when her eyes had been opened to his past. She knew that I loved her—with hope of no return . . . till now. Might not her heart, when it recovered its health, turn from the hopeless to one who had dared to hope? It would surely be but natural and womanly if it did.

So I permitted myself at last to think—almost to hope.

And I dreamed my jewelled dreams again, and

joyed in my starry visions, and builded my castles-in-the-air to my heart's delight.

You see,—I knew so little of woman, and so much less of My Lady.

It all helped me back to health, however, and in the fulness of time I saw my book actually published and on sale.

I haunted the windows of bookshops and cursed them when it was not on view, and so my curses were many.

I actually saw one man buy it at a bookstall, and could barely refrain from clapping him on the back. Instead, I had the brilliant idea of demanding a copy for myself which, as I expected, the clerk was unable to produce. At which I expressed extreme surprise, and flattered myself that I had thereby possibly created, if not a demand, at all events a possible supply.

In the ardour of success I tried that at other stalls, and not infrequently got caught out. On such occasions I devised the plan of asking for a second copy and grumbling when it was not.

I did all a father could do for his first-born, and accumulated quite a stock of my bantlings, which I sent by Carter-Paterson to Johnstone and begged him to bestow where they would do me most service.

He himself, good fellow that he was, was enthusiastic about the book, and he spread it round to

such good purpose, and accompanied it with such energetic recommendation, that it began to be talked about, and my publishers politely begged me to call for the purpose of discussing future business. All of which was extremely satisfactory. . . . And, as soon as I had seen to all this, I packed up my traps and returned to Dartmoor for the third time.

The first time I had gone as a convict, cursing myself as a bungler ; cursing the man on whose account I was there ; cursing life generally for its scurvy treatment.

The second time I had gone—as a free man indeed, yet bound in shackles of my own perverse contriving more surely than any poor wretch in the Prison.

And now, by the grace of God, and the wisdom and patience and goodness of My Lady, I was returning again a free man in fullest truth, freed not only from the fetters of the past, but from the spirit that had, of its own evil will, insisted on wearing them. And, moreover, filled with hopes for the future which though only as yet whispering in my heart were still most potent factors in my life.

Never had I enjoyed a railway journey in my life as I did that one. Everything combined to make every detail of it sheerest delight.

At Paddington I saw six of my books in a row on

the bookstall, with a nice bold label, "IAN CARRIL'S LATEST.—The Book of The Day." More truthfully they might, I thought, have made it,—“IAN CARRIL'S FIRST.—A Book for All Time.” But one does not cavil at the gifts of the gods, and I let it go at that. For six in a row on a bookstall speaks volumes for any book.

In the dining-car I saw a lady reading it between the courses. I boldly produced my own copy. The car seemed suddenly full of my book.

Between Newton Abbot and Bovey I was like a child, first at one window, than at the other, to pick up the first glimpses of the distant Moor; and the sight of Rippon and Hey set my heart bounding joyfully.

I had wired young Wright, of the 'Dolphin' at Bovey, to meet me with his car, and after a word of greeting we were whirling through the still shady lanes, though here and there bare branches were beginning to show. Then we were climbing up and up, with the eastern lowlands on the left glimmering in an opalescent haze, till at last the strong sweet air of the Moor came at me like a breath of new life, and I felt like shouting aloud for joy.

Young Wright would have entertained me with his genial conversation. But I answered haphazard, I fear, for my heart and my thoughts made better speed even than his 18-horse-power De Dion-Bouton, and had already topped the ridges and were safe

home once more in the peace and sanctity of My Lady's little House of Prayer.

And now we were out on the open Moor-road, and here were Hey, and Saddle, and Rippon, the bold bluff sentinels of the Moor, all tendering mighty welcomes. And now we were grinding on towards Bonehill Down, and here were Chinkwell and Bell and Honeybags on ahead. There across the valley was Hamildown, looming amethystine already on this his shadowed side, looking indeed like the mighty father of all amethysts ;—and there, away down in the valley among the clustering trees, were the russet-brown roofs of Heysham, the Mecca of my pilgrimage, the centre of all my hopes.

Then the long swift dive down Graystone Hill, and my good friend the landlord of the little inn was already fathering me, before I was well out of the car, and in a dozen little ways testifying his joy at the return of the prodigal.

There was a blazing fire of logs on the hearth in my sitting-room, and on the table a letter.

It was just two words from My Lady,—“Welcome !—Beatrice.”

My heart leaped at it. I accepted it as an omen, though I knew that it was but just one more of those little forethoughtful delicacies of friendly attention which only such large busy hearts as hers have leisure and grace to indulge in.

Eight o'clock found me in my back corner externe

seat in the little white chapel. It was quite dark as I came along the lanes, and lingered for a moment on the bridge to hear in advance My Lady's voice in the ripple of the stream against its boulder.

The ever-open door of the little sanctuary proffered me rosy welcome before I passed through the green wicket-gate. I felt like a strayed sheep coming back to the fold,—like a wanderer of the night returning to the warmth and cheer of home.

The ruby lamp that swung before the altar cast a white light on the roof and upper part of the walls, and a soft crimson shadow on all below. The dividing-line just touched the head of the crucified Christ on the south wall and threw it into startling prominence. The rest of the drooping figure was all tinged red.

As the red light flickered in the draught of the open door, once more it seemed to me as though the face of Him who hung there on the Cross worked again in its last agony, while in front of Him the red lamp swung gently like a censer held by angel hands, offering for His comfort the incense of many fervent prayers.

I knelt and thanked God for all He had done for me since that first night I came there—and most of all for the gracious goodness of her whose prayers and wisdom and faithful friendliness had wrought this wondrous change in me.

My thoughts, as I knelt, wandered back inevitably

to that first unwarrantable intrusion on the privacy of My Lady's sanctuary,—when I had actually dragged her from her prayers and thrust my doleful self and my troubles upon her already burdened soul.

My heart was profoundly touched at being there once more. I had come, bondman more than most, and she had set me free. All the worship of my soul and the fullest service of my whole life could not suffice to thank her. I prayed God, as I had never prayed before, for His richest blessing on her, for all time, and after.

And when I raised my head at last she was kneeling there before me in her accustomed place.

I sat and watched the golden crown, toned to gleaming copper by the ruby lamp, and thought on the past and the future. And my airy castles shook a little at their foundations.

It was easier to think such wild possibilities when far away from her than here in her actual presence.

She was wearing the Madonna-blue gown with much lace, and a necklace of turquoise and pearls and tiny turquoise beads in her ears,—perhaps to give me welcome. For the first time I had seen her so arrayed I had been somewhat overwhelmed and felt like a worm before her, and she had been infinitely amused and had laughed me out of it.

In my infatuation as builder of air-castles I drew good augury from even so small a thing as her choice of a dress to wear that night. Perhaps, I said to

myself, she has already come to realise the uselessness of wasting the wealth of her love where it is not deemed worth the taking. Perhaps . . . ah, well, you see, my hopes and my imagination had taken the bits in their teeth and were doing a gallop on their own account.

“Heartiest congratulations!” she said warmly, when at last she came towards me with outstretched hand. “It looks like going.”

“It is going. The bookstall at Paddington had six all in a row.”

“Splendid! That is fame. And I am heartily glad. And you are quite recovered?”

“Oh, quite. I never felt better in my life.”

“An illness sometimes has that effect. It clears the system of minor ills.”

“And you?”—and I scrutinised her face for sign of her feeling.

“Better,” she said, with the steady gray eyes full on mine. “But——” and she stooped to pick up the charged lamp, and stepped lightly up on to the seat, and set her foot on the rail in front, and lit the new lamp, and deftly exchanged it for the old.

And it seemed to me very typical of her, and symbolic too. Be her own troubles what they might there was always duty to be done, and she stepped bravely up to do it, and in that was the charm and race of her life.

“Come into the dining-room,” she said, when all was done, “and tell me everything you have been doing and thinking. Have you decided on your next book yet?”

She cast her usual lingering loving look round the little white chapel, as though loth to leave it even for the night, and we went through the long dim passage to the dining-room—the room with the curtained doorway through which she had come to me that first night like the dawn of a new life.

The light of the shaded lamp blended with the glow of the burning peats on the cobbett in the wide fire-place, and glimmered and winked back from the old oak furniture and the glass doors of the cabinets and bookcases. Over the fire-place the row of copper pans and kettles caught up the reflections and made a warm little afterglow of their own, like the dusky amber in the west when the sun has gone down behind Hamildown.

To a homeless man the snug warmth and homeliness of it all made almost overpowering appeal, and brought a swelling of the heart and a moistening of the eyes. Never in all my life had an ordered home seemed so desirable to me.

That room of course held memories for me that no other place in the world could ever hope to equal, for it was the birthplace of my better self.

“Smoke if you please! I know it will make you happier,” she said, and picked up the kitten from

the hearth and sank down into a low lounging-chair with it in her lap. "And now—tell!—as we say on Dartymoor."

"What shall I tell?"

"Everything!"—Ah, if I had been able to, and dared!—"Everything you are not ashamed of."

"I've nothing to be ashamed of,—nothing I dare not tell."

"That's more than most men could say. Well—I won't tease you. What have you decided about your next book? Much will be expected of you now, you know," and we fell to discussion of it.

She showed no outward sign of the grief-storm she had passed through. Her face and her manner were alike perfectly calm and controlled. Only in her eyes I thought I could detect at times just a shadow of weariness, as of one who had passed through bitterness and still felt the effects.

We never touched upon her trouble. For her, it was, I could well believe, too recent, too grievous, too sacred. And for me,—it surely was not in me to resurrect what I hoped with all my heart she might be trying her best to bury for ever.

And in that silence concerning it my heart found occasion for hope.

17.

DARTMOOR is not probably a place that most people would choose as a winter resort. The winter I spent there was the happiest, and in every way the most enjoyable, of my life.

At the inn I had every possible comfort. At Heysham I had inspiration such as falls to the lot of few. On the rare good days the invitation of Moor and Tor to climb and see how good the earth still was, in spite of rains and mists and storms, was irresistible, and My Lady was always ready for a walk when her many other duties permitted.

And I was working hard on my next book.

What could man want more ?

Well, the satisfied man—putting aside dead-drunks and the occupants of lunatic asylums—is still to be sought.

Man is ever wanting more. And I,—with the happiest of environment, with work to do which was joyous in its engrossment, and with the uplifting friendship of My Lady,—still wanted more. With every fibre of my heart and soul, with every craving that was in me, I wanted My Lady herself—all herself for myself.

Apart from that—which I still think was both natural and inevitable, as for me it was certainly mightily uplifting—our friendship was perfect.

I owed everything that I was, or might ever hope to be, to her. I worshipped her as I had not dreamed it was in the heart of man to worship.

And she—she regarded me, I knew, as one of the prizes life had yielded her,—as one of her answered prayers,—as a mother regards her returned prodigal. As anything more? . . . I could not tell. But hope I could, and did.

I saw her at least twice a day, for on the days when I was not actually working in the chapel—and I could always write there better than anywhere else in the world—I made it a practice to go up both morning and evening, at the times when I knew she would be there, no matter what the weather. And sometimes it was bad enough.

It made a break in the day's work; it gave me always a sense of uplift; the sight and sound of her were always to be looked forward to,—and looked back upon. And I made my own prayers in the little sanctuary with not only no slightest sense of incongruity, but with immense spiritual benefit, even though my eyes might be resting on what my strict forebears would have called graven images and been mightily offended at.

They never troubled me. Very much the contrary indeed,—for the sight of the dying Christ on

the Cross always quickened in me a sense of His wonderful love and my own vast disparity and need. And they were to My Lady, I could see, no more than aids to devotion in a similar way.

But with the growth of my knowledge of her inner self, as manifested in her outward doings, my ideas on all such matters had broadened till limits to them barely existed.

No doubt I was vastly influenced in all this by the personality of My Lady herself and my love and reverence for her. But truly it seemed to me that any religion which could have produced her was worthy of highest respect; for never in my life so far had I met so devout and fervent a worshipper, nor one so wise and clear-sighted, nor one with such implicit faith in the Higher Powers, nor one who so perpetually expressed her religion in the natural and gracious terms of her daily life.

Often when I sat writing in the chapel and wanted a few minutes' rest, I would pick up one and another of the many books spread broadcast over the bench, within hand's reach of the place where she always sat. She loved to have her favourites all about her, and everything she left there was at the service of any who desired.

Many a delightful sidelight on her thoughts and tastes and feelings I got from the swift pencil-markings which showed her special approval of this passage or of that. And it was in this way that I

lighted on some verses of hers, typed on a slip, and used in her own missal as a marker.

I read them eagerly, for they were one side of her very self—just her all through, in one of her high, exalted moods when cost was nothing compared with attainment.

She called them “ONE GOLDEN DAY,” and just such golden days—in some of their aspects—we had had together on the moors and hills, and the verses came home to me.

I could not but wonder—and wonder keenly—when they were written. There was no date—nothing to show when. If lately—I would draw wild hope from them. If long since—they need not necessarily strip me bare of hope. For what had been need not necessarily so continue for ever—in the face of undeserved ill-treatment—no matter how staunch and true the sufferer.

Anyway, the lines appealed to me mightily. Just so would I right gladly have given full one-half of all the days still due to me, if by so doing I could have ensured her close and loving companionship for the remaining half.

Under the impulse of my vast enjoyment of them I made a hasty copy of the verses in my note-book, and savoured them many times afterwards.

Here they are, just as My Lady wrote them and as I copied them. I love them s ill.

I ask of life one golden day,
Before my sum of days shall be,—
A day whose price I fain would pay
With all the days yet due to me.

Twin sister of the day now done,
Whose white and gold knew ne'er a stain,
Before the clouds shut out the sun,
And shadowed all my life with pain.

One other Autumn Day with him,
Inside the hills' encircling arms,
To see them folded, rim on rim,
Between us and the world's alarms.

To feel the tide of wine-red blood
Through every nerve and fibre swirl,—
To see the river's rippling flood
Flash o'er the pebbles white as pearl.

Beneath our feet, the flower-sown land,
The sun's warm kiss upon our skin,
Heart bare to heart, hand locked in hand,
As children, clean from smallest sin.

And thus to wander through a world
Of opal and of amethyst,
On heather still with dew's empearled,
Up hill-brows veiled in golden mist.

Until at length our dazzled eyes
Naught, naught but gold, gold, gold can see ;
A golden world 'neath golden skies,
All life one golden ecstasy.

Then, noontide meal from shallow scrip,
With but one cup us two between ;
O happy fault, that lets my lip,
All eager, press where his has been.

And when the day her gold has spent,
Yet more and other gold to come,—
While rest we twain in tired content,
Beside the fire,—that gold of home.

And then, to kneel beside his chair,
Within the haven of his arm,
His kingly hand upon my hair,
And know myself so safe from harm.

Last, on his breast to fall asleep,
Rocked by the rhythm of his breath,
And never wake again to weep :
O happy sleep that men call death !

My God, I ask this perfect bliss,
Before my sum of days shall be,—
To purchase one such day as this
With all the days yet due to me !

On the bright rare days we frequently flung work aside and care to the winds and took to the Moor, and the Moor was always joyous to us in its ever-changing guises, and she knew them all. And after such excursions she would at times come in to tea with me at the inn, an event always regarded there as conferring upon it unusual honour.

My room looked out on to the back garden and Hamildown, and was absolutely quiet and private ; and with a roaring fire of logs, and My Lady at the tea-table, there was not a room in England I would have changed it with—except her own most delightful dining-room at Heysham, which stood first of all rooms in my estimation.

And here, or there, before the fire of logs or the

fire of peats on the iron cobbett, we would afterwards sit and talk, deeply at times, on many and strange subjects.

The next world and our life in it was a very favourite subject of My Lady's musings, and very cheerful and characteristic were her hopes and ideas concerning it.

"For myself," I remember her saying, "I shall ask God to let me go on tending troubled souls just as I try to do now, but with all the added knowledge and power that I shall have then. And He will let me, I am sure. . . . And I would like also to help struggling young writers—suggest ideas for good books to them,—help them to the right word——"

"No one could do it better," I said.

"There will be such an immensity of things to do. Oh, it will be a brave, busy life. . . ."

"And, fortunately, plenty of time to do it in."

"Yes,—all eternity, thank God!—For ever—and for ever—and for ever! Can you imagine it, Ian Carril? It will be very wonderful. . . . And I shall have my poor Lancelot to get out of Purgatory . . ." and she fell to silent musing.

And I said nothing. My views as to Purgatory were nebulous, and I had been hoping that other might have been less in her thoughts of late.

We were up at Tunhill Tor one afternoon, and there My Lady chose a favourite nook among the big rocks which sheltered us from the easterly wind;

and we sat and looked out—over Bellever, a mighty amethyst carved roughly to the shape of a woman's breast ;—and Hamildown, a dusky giant, with bare brown shoulders, and lower limbs draped in a patchwork of varicoloured tillage ;—and the wide valley, where the gray of houses and rocks showed prominently through the thinned-out greens and russet-browns of the leafless trees.

And, as we sat looking out over the little world that was so dear to both of us, those verses of hers,—“ One Golden Day,” came back to me with unique force, and I began to repeat them.

She turned and gazed at me, at first in surprise, then with understanding. But before I had ended she had turned again and was sitting looking raptly at Bellever once more.

“ Yes ! ” she said presently. “ I remember writing them. And I felt like that at the time ; . . . but now . . . ”

“ But now ? ” I asked, when the pregnant silence had lasted too long for my tingling senses.

“ Now I think they were somewhat overstrained, maybe. Now I would make no bargain with God. I see things clearer. If He wills it, it will be. If not—it is for the best. . . . It was one day when we had been to Bellever—he and I. And I knew that he loved me, though he had not then told me so. Then—afterwards . . . as you know.”

And then she turned suddenly to me and asked :

“Are you falling in love with me, Ian Carril?”

Her very direct questions were apt to take one aback at times, but this one required no consideration and was easily answered.

“Yes.”

“And you would marry me if I consented to it?”

“To-day, if you permitted. To-morrow, if you insisted on delay.”

“Then, dear friend, don’t!——”

“But how can I help it? I fell in love with you that very first night,—as a man might love an angel—worshipfully, but without hope. But now——”

“My friend, my very dear friend and brother,—don’t!”—she laid her hand momentarily on my arm.

“It can only lead to sorrow for both of us. . . . I shall never marry, in the usual sense of the word. For one thing, I am wedded to my chapel and my life of prayer. Look at my wedding-ring!” and she held out her right hand, on the third finger of which I had often noticed a plain gold band. “For another thing, my heart is all Lancelot’s. You thought I might change,—that his treatment of me would turn me from him. O, my dear, how little you know of love! How *can* I make you understand it? . . . I love him more than ever, and shall do till I die—and still more after. *Can* you not understand?”

“No,” I said, presently, and somewhat dully, at this sudden and utter destruction of my airy castles.

“I cannot understand . . . yet . . . I was a fool. . . . I had dared to hope. I thought I knew you. I know you are staunch and true above belief. But . . . after all he has done—all you have suffered——. . . It is beyond me.”

She reached out a quick impulsive hand, as was her way, and grasped mine.

“Dear friend—and brother! You are no fool. Not many perhaps *could* understand. Nay, I don’t know that I understand it fully myself, but there it is. My heart craves him still——”

“After all he has done!—after all you have suffered! No,—I cannot understand it. . . . And with no hope of him ever changing——”

“I hope always,” she said quickly. “And I pray always, for him and for myself. When God sees fit He will give him back to me. If He does not—then it is best so. . . . See now,—I am making you suffer, I know. I cannot help it. Will you hate me for it?”

“Hate you? I love you all the more. I cannot help it either.”

“There!—you see! You are learning what love is. You love me, and no matter what I did you would go on loving me. Is not that so?”

“Surely!”

“Well, that is how I feel to that other, and I cannot help myself. And that is the highest love—to love on and on without return,—ay, even when

the return is scorn and contumely. . . . That—is—love ! ”

The last words she spoke as though speaking to her inner self, to her own soul,—in a low soft voice, with such a deep and vibrant thrill in it that it struck right to my heart. And then she fell silent and sat gazing across at Bellever.

“ You will not let it spoil our friendship ? ” she asked wistfully at last, with her hand on my arm again.

I bent and touched her hand with my lips, and said, out of the fulness of my heart, “ I would lay down my life to win you happiness.”

“ I am sure you would. But there is nothing you can do—except remain my very dear friend. I can’t tell you what you have been to me—how you have helped. You will never know, because you never can know all the soreness of my wounding. His contempt and scorn of me positively made me feel soiled and bedraggled, as though I had sinned myself. I cannot explain it. . . . It was as though the abuse he flung at me was actual mud, and stuck, and I could not get rid of the feeling of it. Oh, it was horrible. I had done nothing, and yet I felt stained. . . . And your respect and reverence and consideration have given me back some of my own self-respect. I felt like a pariah. You have made me feel what you have thought me. It would wound me mortally if I lost you too. . . . I believe

God sent you for my healing. It would be just like Him."

And after a silence she asked abruptly, "Did you recognise him?" It was the first time she had referred to the miniature.

"Yes."

"When it had gone I was sorry I had sent it. It was not wisdom, but I was off my balance at the time. . . . You hold his honour in your hands."

"It is as safe there as your own."

"I know it. I trust you completely. . . . It is very comforting to be able to speak of it all with one I can trust and who knows all about it. It is a great bond between us. Now that my dear Father Dominic is gone you are the only man, except the old lawyer, who knows it all."

"I am very grateful for your trust in me. I wish I could help."

"But you cannot," she said hastily, in obvious fear lest the idea of interfering in some way should be in me. "Only God can help me in this, and when He sees it good to do so He will. I can wait His time."

And she rose and we went down the hill together.

I ANODYNED my sense of loss with the hardest of hard work on my book. There at least I could have my own way—to some extent, at all events. And meanwhile My Dear Lady was there. I could, and did, see her every day, and the sight and sound of her were always mightily comforting and uplifting.

I found myself regarding myself somewhat aloofly—from the outside, as it were—in this matter. When I was by myself I wondered at her supreme constancy to—not even an ideal—simply to a man whom I deemed utterly unworthy of her. I marvelled at it. I argued with myself that, in spite of all she still felt, the time might yet come——

But the moment I met her, these tiny tentative tendrils of hope withered, and I knew that, be the object of it what he might, her ideal of Love would never lower by one golden hair's breadth,—that she would go on loving and hoping till she died, and after.

Her characteristic bringing of the matter to a head and clearing away of all possible misunderstandings between us set our friendship on a still firmer basis, and in spite of my occasional hopelessly

hopeful lapses when I was away from her, when we were together our hearts were very open to one another.

And our friendship grew. For her I had given up the grim black thing that had devoured half my days, and but for her would have had them all. For her I had given up the one sole bright hope of my life. There remained but one thing left to me, and that I vowed should be devoted to her happiness,—if indeed her happiness could possibly come to her from the gaining of her heart's desire. And of that I was still more than doubtful.

But I had infinite faith in her own clear wisdom, and in the spiritual perception she derived from her intimate intercourse with her Higher Powers in her little sanctuary.

She believed it well to strive still for this that had been denied her through some malign earthly influence. There remained nothing for me but to endeavour, with all my heart and soul, to further her wishes.

And so the intention again took root in me to seek out this man, and if possible to strike the scales from his eyes and open them to the value and beauty of what he was so perversely rejecting. As to the ultimate issue, should I succeed in bringing them together, that I must perforce leave to those Other Friends of My Lady in whom she reposed such implicit confidence.

I said no word of my intention to her. For, in the first place, I knew she would instantly veto it. And, in the second, I wished to be able to say to that man, when I confronted him, that this that I was doing was entirely of my own devising and that she knew nothing whatever about it.

It was April before my book was finished. It had gone slower than the first by reason of the distraction of my mind at times on these other matters, and also to some extent by my desire to make it an improvement on the first. Second books, after a first success, are critical matters, I knew ; and third ones still more so ; and I was determined that so far as in me lay nothing should be lacking to make it an advance on the other.

Towards the end of the month, when Nature was all aquick with the burgeoning of Spring, I was ready to go,—as ready, that is, as a man could be whose heart was lost to the Moor and given irrevocably to her who dwelt there.

I had been able to get no definite information as to 'Lancelot's' whereabouts. Knowing now who he was, and the delicate relation in which we stood to one another, I had to make my enquiries very cautiously.

Denver I could not ask. Johnstone I could not ask. For both would instantly have jumped to the conclusion that I had had a relapse from sanity and was on his track once more.

The man seemed to have disappeared. He was probably off again on one of those confidential missions connected with military matters which seemed to occupy most of his time. I could only hope that in London I might be able to get definite news as to where he was and when he was likely to be back.

Before going, however, I desired greatly to make two very special pilgrimages. One with My Lady to her favourite Dream Tor ; the other by myself to Bellever. For these two held their own unique places in my heart.

It was a perfect Spring day that we spent, first on Hound Tor, and then, crossing a great space of high moor, on Dream Tor.

There had been rain the previous day, and the soft white sunshine and thin black shadows chased one another riotously over the Moor and Tors and played hide-and-seek in the valleys. The bracken was only pushing its curly brown fingers through the crust, but some of the hill-sides were aflame with gorse. In the ploughed fields the red-brown earth was splashed with the tender green of coming crops. The meadows were dappled with frolicsome white lambs, and the air was full of their bleatings ; and on the Moor, troops of ponies and tiny stiff-legged foals fled at our approach.

The distant ridges and Tors loomed blue under the rain-washed sky. Only when the shadows lingered

on them did they momentarily don their deep rich robes of amethyst, and everywhere the rough gray summits of the Tors stood out, bold and stark, like the helmed heads of ancient gods, pushing through from the underworld to see what the sons of men were making of things up above.

They seemed to me in very truth to be, every one of them, straining to the very limits of their rugged necks to catch a glimpse over their fellows' shoulders of My Lady. And I shared the feeling to the full and gazed my fill, determined to carry with me to the noisome city this fair remembrance of her.

She was always particular about her dress and the adaptation of colours to her own, and she rejoiced in looking her best, as every true woman should. When God dowers a woman with grace and beauty it surely pleases Him to see it becomingly adorned.

She was wearing, that day, another wonderful costume of golden brown with a shining satin belt of the same colour, and it was trimmed round the neck, and down the front as far as the waist, with some soft velvety stuff of exactly the same shades as the peacock's feathers twined round the crown of her black hat.

The shaded loveliness of the blacks and blues and greens set off her hair and face and eyes to perfection. I had never seen her so bewitching, and I could hardly take my eyes off her.

“Am I not pretty?” she laughed joyously, when she caught me staring.

“Past words!”

“God is very good, and He likes to see me at my best.”

And as we sat, noting and quietly remarking on the seasonable changes on the Moor, the sun lit suddenly on the Prison away on the slope of Hessary, and the same thought stirred us both. Just so had it sprung out at us that other day, which seemed so long ago, when, sitting on these same gray rocks, I had at last responded to the call in me which herself, and her prayers, and her wise and gracious treatment had evoked,—and had finally shed my nightmare load and cast my lot for better things.

As was her way when words were not enough, she reached out her hand, with shining face and eyes. I held the soft, capable hand for a moment and then bent and kissed it. There were times when words failed me.

“We have travelled far since then,” she said meaningly.

“From outer darkness into the light,—from hell to . . . at all events, earth——”

“I wish I could give you your heaven, dear friend,” she sighed softly. “But . . . you know . . . it is impossible.”

“When I think of how things were with me then,

it is much to hear myself called 'dear friend.' It is more than I ever looked for, or would have believed possible. I wish to God I could make you return in kind."

"But you have done. You are doing. Every step in your progress is a thank-offering. It is sweet to me like the incense in my little House of Bread when God Himself is there. Oh, I am grateful to you for it all. And—your friendship, your devotion to me, your reverence, the assurance that you have brought back to me that I am lovable in spite of the rebuffs and denials I have met with elsewhere—I cannot tell you what these have meant to me. If it was given to me to help you, you have no less helped me."

"I wish I could do more. I have only one wish now, and that is your completest happiness."

"I know it, dear friend, and my heart thanks you. But that is beyond our compassing. When God sees it well, He will undoubtedly bring it about. I can wait, for I trust Him implicitly. . . . How long do you expect to be away?"

"I cannot say definitely. . . . I am coming to count every day lost that I spend away from the Moor."

"Yes,—that is how I always feel. I am not myself again till I get back. It's wonderful how it wraps itself round one's heart."

"To-morrow I am going to spend on Bellever,"

“ Ah ! ” she sighed softly.

“ It is my first love and my last, though your Dream Tor is close up to it.”

“ Some time I too shall go to Bellever,” she said quietly, nodding her shapely head with pregnant meaning. “ Some time . . . with—him ! . . . I know it. . . . I am as sure of it as that I am sitting here. . . . If it is not in this life, then it certainly will be in the next,”—and her face, when I looked at it, was luminous with that hopeful faith and certainty.

The following day I went alone to Bellever, going by way of Lower Cator and Rowden, and the plantations and Cator Common, to Bellever Bridge, and then straight up across the Moor to the great elusive Tor.

I spent the whole day there. It was for me a solemn day of highest and deepest thought, and I came home the stronger for it.

I lay all day among the great gray slabs, courting the sun and dodging the wind. I rejoiced quietly over the broken spell of the grim gray prison on the opposite ridge. I put up more than one unspoken petition, as I lay there, for the poor souls still in bondage. By God’s great mercy, and My Lady’s good-will and wisdom, I had been delivered out of the net. I knew the soul-pressure of those grim stone walls, and out there, in the sweet wide freedom of the Moor, my heart went out to my less

fortunate brothers, even as My Lady's, I knew, did all the time.

But chiefly I thought of what lay in front of me. If I could find that man I was determined to lay My Lady's case clearly and fully before him. Listen to me he should, if I had to hold him by the throat the while. The rest was in the hands of the Higher Powers. I could only hope for the best.

I thought out all the possibilities of meeting him in circumstances suitable to the necessities of the case. And that I saw would be my greatest difficulty. If I could get hold of him, and obtain or compel his attention, I had little doubt that I could lay the matter before him in a way that should at all events go home, however cold, or heartless, or simply misinformed he might be. For I was very much fuller of the sense of My Lady's rare qualities than ever she was herself. To her they were natural ; to me they were wonderful.

The smoke from innumerable swaling fires, burning off the gorse to make room for more beneficent grass, came curling along the wind and hung around the rocks of the Tor, and made me think again of incense and altars. The pungent smell was as sweet to me as the incense-fumes which carry up the prayers of the people, and truly the great gray Tor was to me an altar that day.

And an altar with a sacrifice, for I was finally purging my soul of all smaller hopes and lesser

things, and dedicating it absolutely to the service of My Lady ;—with no faintest hope now of response or return such as I had once dared to dream of.

Her return had been made long since, in advance, and to the very fullest, when my response was still in doubt. And as I mused upon it all I got fresh light on the wonder and beauty of the Greatest Sacrifice of All, made once and in advance, for myself and for all mankind.

I lived over again all the other days I had spent among those friendly gray giants, and it was only the sight of the setting sun that drove me at last down the crackling slope towards the bridge and the road across the Moor.

I went up to the chapel that night, and wondered, as I watched My Lady at her prayers, if I should ever see her so again.

She bade me good-bye and God-speed, when she had exchanged the ruby lamps, and little knew that it was her own welfare for which she was praying, more even than for mine.

I FOUND it extremely difficult to get any definite information as to the whereabouts of the man I sought. For my enquiries could only be made among the younger generation of press-men, who knew me only as Carril and did not in any way associate me with that old legend of some attempt on that other's life, which was now almost buried in the limbo of ancient history. In these strenuous days, eight long years are very much more than enough to drop a very permanent veil over such an incident as that, unless you happen to be in some way intimately associated with it.

As usual, he was said to be in half a dozen different places,—in France, in Flanders, in Servia, in Egypt, in Italy, in Russia. Each one of these I was explicitly given as the scene of his present mission. The fact, of course, being that, since his work was always confidential, enquiries as to his whereabouts were always countered by diplomatic evasions and perversions.

I passed the proofs of my book and saw it on sale, and still waited on. My man might return any day. It was only here, at the centre of things, that I could possibly come across him.

But I grew very sick of the sights and sounds and smells of London in the hot weather. I longed ardently for the fresh sweet winds of Dartmoor, and every letter I received from My Lady increased my longing to return.

One evening, to pass the slow hours, I wandered into the Savoy Theatre. Someone had advised me to see Stephen Phillips's "Sin of David," and I went.

The sonorous lines and sombre subject were not uncongenial to my feelings. I was following the last scene with interest when a man, some distance along the row of stalls behind me, rose suddenly to go.

He came slowly along, to the obvious annoyance of the other occupants of the row. A man behind me muttered "Damn!" and I glanced round to see what was causing the disturbance. Then I got up also and passed through the swing-door almost at his heels.

Providence had not overlooked me. It was the man I sought,—altered much in face since last we met, changed even since My Lady's miniature was painted, but without doubt my man.

And, in my now larger knowledge of his past, I wondered what the change in him might mean.

It was the same high fine face, but hardened and saddened beyond belief. It was almost grim in its embitterment. Not one trace was there in it of the

joy of life or pride of accomplishment—yet both of these he had tasted to the full.

I recovered my cloak and hat at the same time as he did his. I did not think there was any chance of his recognising me, but I sedulously kept my back to him.

I was close behind him as he passed out. He turned into the Strand, hesitated for a moment as to a taxi, and then walked slowly westward.

The pavements were thronged. He turned down Adam Street and into John Street, and so into Villiers Street. A woman spoke to him, even turned and walked alongside him for a dozen yards, still speaking to him. She was handsome and handsomely dressed. He never even looked at her. He just walked slowly on like one completely buried in his own gloomy thoughts. He turned under the railway bridge and passed on to the Embankment.

Providence was good to me. I could not have wished better.

He took off his hat and carried it in his hand, and, as he passed under the electric lamps, I saw that his hair was grizzling. The fine poise and carriage of his head and shoulders made me think of My Lady. She too carried herself in just that same lofty way. I saw her again as she sailed along the dim passage in front of me that first night.

Then—I followed her because I loved her the moment I saw her.

Now, for her sake, I was following the man whom I hated above every man on earth,—whom for some inscrutable reason she loved above every man on earth.

Then—my following had led to the saving of my soul.

What would it lead to now? The saving of his soul?

I doubted it, from the hard look on his face. But I could only do my best. If I could only induce him to go to My Lady—to meet her, face to face. . . . But he looked like one who would be hard to lead and impossible to drive.

My long-looked-for opportunity had come, however. We were abreast of that loneliest part of the Embankment between Whitehall Stairs and New Scotland Yard.

I stepped forward and laid my hand on his shoulder.

“I desire a few words with you, — —,” and I named him by his right name.

He neither started nor showed surprise. He simply turned his head in a bored fashion and looked at me.

“I have waited months for this chance,” I hurried on, “and now you have got to listen.”

He shrugged his broad straight shoulders slightly, and looked as though he would shake off my detaining hand and go on his way.

“It is about Beatrice—the Lady of the Moor——”

And at that he turned on me so keen and searching a look, in which soul-hunger predominated even over surprise, that I knew he must listen to me in spite of himself.

“What of her? . . . And who the devil are you?” he snapped, and verily looked as if he would eat me alive.

“This—and understand, if you please, that she does not know I have come to you. She would be beside herself if she knew——”

“Then why the devil have you come?”

“Because I would give my life to give her happiness, and you have come near to killing her with your brutality. She is an angel of purity and goodness,—and my God!—what are you to treat her so? And yet she loves you in spite of it all. You have won the heart of one of the noblest of women and you trample it in your own filthy mire.”

“And where do you come in?”—he could not forbid himself the taunt, though he winced as he made it.

We had halted near a lamp in the vehemence of the moment; he held his hat in his hand still; I could see every detail of his face, though he had it admirably under control.

But he was all aboil inside, as I could see by his eyes as he sped another shaft, poisonous, but, as it seemed to me afterwards, perhaps not wholly unnatural in the peculiar circumstances of my

aggression, which undoubtedly lent themselves to grossest misapprehension.

“ If it is money you and she want ” . . . and, recognising where we were, he glanced meaningly in the direction of New Scotland Yard.

“ Willingly—if you will,” I answered sharply. “ Whose life will best stand full disclosure ?—yours or hers ? But that is unworthy even of you. Will you hear what I have got to say ? ”

He looked keenly into my eyes and face, knitted his broad white brows perplexedly for a moment,—I thought he was recognising me,—then indicated a vacant seat, too near Police Head-quarters to tempt even the weariest of vagrants, and we walked along and sat down.

“ Well ?—go on ! ” he said curtly. “ Say your say and have done with it ! ”

He rested his right elbow on his knee and his face against his fist, in the attitude of one listening perforce.

“ I have more to say than you imagine. I thank you for giving me this chance of saying it. . . . Eight years ago you robbed me of my sister, Honor Daunt.” He sat up and looked at me. “ You broke her life and mine. I retaliated by trying to kill you. I was a novice and I bungled, or we would neither of us be here. I served my term in Dartmoor Prison, and I lived for only one thing—and that was to make an end of you as soon as I was free again. . . . ”

A burly constable came sauntering along, glanced at us, recognised my companion, saluted and received a brief response, and passed slowly on.

. . . "I spent my ticket time abroad, and lived night and day with only one intention, and that was your death as soon as I could accomplish it. The purpose was not natural to me. Your false-dealing with my sister had twisted to evil everything in me that might have made for good. For seven years I fought bitterly within myself to keep the evil uppermost. Then, by God's mercy, I came across My Lady of Heysham, through reading one of her books. I found out where she lived. I went to see her. . . . By her goodness, her wisdom, her many prayers, she cast out my devils and gave me new life. And that life I would gladly lay down to serve her. That is why I am here. She does not know of it. It would come near to killing her if she knew. But I will serve her if I can, in spite of herself, because of what she has done for me. She has saved your life from me. If I can give you back to her it will be something. That is why I am here. She loves you still—in spite of your brutal treatment of her—in spite even of all you have to regret in your past life. . . ."

His eyes had never left my face since I began, except for a second when the policeman passed; but, as I said that, a steely glint shot from them and his jaw clenched tighter.

. . . "I know it all. I was a newspaper man, you see, before I was a convict, and more is known among them than ever gets out, fortunately for some of you. That you, soiled and stained beyond redemption, from any but God's point of view, should treat such a one as My Lady of the Moor as though she were the sinner and you the saint must astound even God Himself. Man!—do you know what you are doing? Night and day she is on her knees for you in her little white chapel, pleading with God for you—you—you! And you scorn and flout her as though she were the stained and you the stainless. God will surely require a heavy reckoning from you for treating one of his dearest servants so."

"I was told——" he began hoarsely, gazing no longer at me, but down at the pavement.

"*You were told——*" I echoed scornfully. "You were told! Good God in heaven! You know My Lady. You loved her. And you were told! And you believed! . . . And she, knowing you, and all about you,—knowing the whole damnable truth about you—loves you still and spends herself in prayer to God for your redemption! . . . Truly you make the reckoning against you a heavy one. . . . She is the noblest and purest of women, and you have set yourself to break her heart . . . and you are doing it."

He had put up his other white fist on the other knee and his face was almost hidden between them.

The man was suffering and I rejoiced at it. The adamantine crust of him was at all events pierced. He was feeling it, and I exulted.

Now he opened the clenched fist nearest me in a gesture of protest.

“Don’t!” he said hoarsely. And presently: “If she has suffered, I have suffered still more. . . . I have not had one hour free from the bitterness of it all since . . . since I was told . . . and, like a fool, believed. My pride in her and in myself was wounded to the quick. . . . In my heart I doubted. But I was told by one I knew well that——”

“I won’t hear it,” I said sharply. “Whatever it was it was a lie, and you ought to have known it. If an angel from heaven came down and slandered My Lady I would strike him in the mouth,—I, who have known her so little. And you, knowing her so well, knowing that every bit of her great heart was yours—you could listen—and believe! My God! I wonder He let you live.”

“You have seen her—lately?” he asked presently.

“Three months ago. Since then I have been waiting here—for you.”

“What is it you want me to do?”—and the greatest victory of my life was won. The victory for the winning of which perhaps my whole life had been meant.

“Will you meet me at Paddington to-morrow

and come down to the Moor with me? I will be under the big clock at 10.15."

He eyed me keenly again, and his face was haggard and his eyes softer than I could have ever imagined them.

"I will come. I would like to see her once more, before——"

He broke off short and rose heavily from the seat, gave me a perfunctory military salute, and went away through the shadows towards Westminster.

I sat for a time considering the whole matter, and the next steps to be taken.

Would he come in the morning?

I had to risk it. I called a taxi and went straight to Paddington. It was long after midnight, and I doubted if it would be possible to make the arrangements I wished, at that time of early morning.

Eventually, however, I secured the ear of an official, who instantly doubted the possibility of securing a whole first-class compartment in the Riviera Express that day.

It was holiday-time. The trains were running very full. Most of the seats were already booked,—and so on.

To end the matter I whispered in his ear the name by which the world knew Lancelot.

"Oh—then—of course, sir! That's quite another story. I'll see to it, sir," and that was settled.

"He'll be for Okehampton, I suppose," said my converted one knowingly.

"We go with you as far as Exeter," I said cryptically.

"Right you are, sir. I understand. I'll see to it myself at once."

"Thanks! Just one other thing. The matter is strictly private. Please keep it so. Better put my name on the window if you must have a name," and I gave him my card.

"I understand, sir. I'll see to it," and I went home with my mind at rest on that point at all events.

I spent an anxious night, however. I rejoiced, and even exulted, in the success so far of my self-assumed mission. But I could not but have some doubts as to whether after all he would actually turn up in the morning. He had been jerked out of his usual lofty self-possession by the exceptional nature of our talk. Cooler reflection might induce him to regard me simply as an offence worthy of no further consideration.

But behind all my doubts was a strong feeling that he would come as he had promised.

Noblesse oblige!—and, since he had promised, it might be that he would come only to tell me that he had decided to go no further. My anxiety would not be at rest till he was actually in the train with no getting out of it till it reached Exeter. If I

got him that far I could surely get him to the journey's end.

But, again, as I pondered deeply all we had said as we sat on that seat on the Embankment, the belief grew in me that he meant to see the matter through.

Without a doubt he had a genuinely deep feeling for My Lady. He had himself suffered keenly through the breach he had himself made. He was, I felt certain, as he sat there with me, convinced in his own mind that his suspicious pride had wronged her, and he was desirous of making reparation to the utmost of his power.

All those to the good.

Against them I might well set a possibly growing feeling of very natural suspicion against myself. Could I blame him if he came to believe my story simply the first step in a very obvious plot to lure him away from town and make an end of him ?

Against that I set the fact that, knowing what he did about me, he must see that had I wanted to kill him I could have done it with perfect ease as we sat on that seat together.

Then again, he was a good judge of men, or he could not carry out the delicate diplomatic work that was entrusted to him. And I hoped that my words and manner might have satisfied him as to my sincerity.

But, above and beyond everything else, I knew,

from my own experience, the potent call of My Lady upon the heart and imagination of any man who had ever once been admitted to the holy place of her heart. This man had suffered bitterly through his own self-exile therefrom. The door of re-entrance lay open to him.

Yes, he would come. I was convinced he would come.

I was at the station before ten, and found my reserved compartment, with a courteous guard ready to do anything I wanted.

I had prepared a telegram for My Lady—

“Be on Believer without fail at four to-day. He is coming. Carril.”

I had intended to dispatch it as soon as I set eyes on my man in the station. But if he should happen to be a few minutes late it might be impossible, and I did not choose to entrust it to anyone else to send off. So very much depended on it.

I took that risk also and sent it. If he never turned up I would have to send another cancelling the first. But I believed he would come. And at 10.15 I was standing under the clock looking out for the fine, hard, clean-cut face among the incoming mobs of lesser folk swarming away to the coast to make their little holidays.

And I, by God's good mercy, was taking to My Lady her heart's desire, and repaying her to some extent for all she had done for me. No wonder I

felt uplifted and aloof from the hot turmoil of humanity that boiled around me.

At 10.25 I had a slight relapse of doubt. Perhaps he had thought better of it and would prove himself a smaller man than I had hoped.

At 10.26 he walked quietly in, saw me and nodded, and I took him straight to our compartment. The expectant guard touched his hat with an admiring look, and locked us safely in.

“**Y**OU had no doubts as to my coming then ? ”
 I said my companion quietly, as the train ran smoothly out.

“ I knew you would come. My Lady wants you and she has waited long.”

Then we fell silent for very many miles as the train whirled through the smiling country,—he, leaning back and gazing out of the window in deepest thought ;—I, in the other corner seat, glancing furtively at him at times, and wondering much what his thoughts might be.

His face told me nothing whatever. Last night, under stress of my provocation, the mask had fallen for a moment. This morning it was impenetrable as ever.

But at times the supreme and unsurpassable wonder of this unusual journey of ours took hold of me, and I would turn and look at him to make sure that he really was there and that I was not dreaming.

But there he sat, the body and soul of him, gazing out at the flying country with those sombre inscrutable eyes of his. And here sat I, who for nine years had lived only to kill him. And I—I of all

men—was taking him to the woman I loved more than my life—the only woman I ever had loved or could love—wringing my heart bare for very love of her, because—marvel of marvels!—she loved him still in spite of all his scorn and ill-treatment of her.

Truly it is a strange world, and with all our boasted free-will we are still all subject to the influence of powers beyond us.

We were near Westbury before another word passed between us. Then, with obvious effort, under the impulsion of the better man within him, he turned and leaned towards me, and said, with deep feeling :

“ I must tell you how grateful I am to you, Noel Daunt, for all you have done in this matter. That you have done it, and for her sake, is the strongest proof you could have given me of my own mistake, which I bitterly regret. It was God’s providence that you lighted on me last night. Another day or two and I should have been gone. And I have hoped that I might never return. . . . Now——” he threw out his two hands with something of the foreigner’s gesture of dissociation from results which none could foresee.

“ You think we shall be in it ? ” I said. It was the end of that fateful month of July, when Europe was in the crucible, and Britain still stood at the side endeavouring to quench the flames.

“ Yes, we shall be in it, and the end is beyond

all knowledge. It will be very terrible. . . . Now, at all events, I shall carry with me the memory of the best of women and of a good man,—both of whom I have deeply wounded,—both of whom have forgiven me . . . yes, I thank God that you lighted on me last night. To-day I could come. To-morrow might have been too late.”

We ran into Exeter prompt to the minute, went to the New London for lunch,—for a very trying time lay before him and it was only right that he should be bodily fit,—and an hour later we were speeding towards St. Thomas and Ide on the road to Dartmoor.

After Longdown the car put on speed, and when we had raced through Moreton Hampstead we began the long climb to the distant blue heights of the Moor.

It was a day of marvellous lights and shades and of rare and tender colour-tones beyond description. We did not speak. Everything had been said. But I knew that the wild fresh beauty of the Moor was working in him, and uplifting him for this climax to his life, as it had always wrought in myself.

He had never asked where I was taking him. And I was glad of that. It showed how entirely he trusted me.

Up and up we climbed, with sheep and ponies scattering disgustfully at our coming, and turning in safety to watch our going with satisfaction.

So, at last, the lonely Warren Inn, then the race down Merripit, the whirl through the overarching trees of Postbridge, and the long swift run along the Princetown Road.

As we topped the rise at the Warren I had sensed his perception of where we were. He did not speak, but he sat up and looked alertly about him. His eyes rested on Bellever, throned superbly in the Moor below and robed in richest amethyst, and on the buildings of Princetown, coiled like a striped adder on the slope of Hessary.

Bellever ! . . . As the name welled up into my mind at sight of the great triangular hill, there came with it, like a flood, the recollection of all it had stood for to me—in my depths, in my heights, and now in this my final mingled depth and height. For if this last time I might ever see it meant an end to all the hopes and visions I had centred round My Lady, it meant also that to the very fullest of my power I was carrying out her Credo of the Love that gave and gave, without hope of return, without stint in its giving. It meant that the precept and practice of her own large heart had come to fullest fruition in me, and I knew that that would add immeasurably to the joy of her own recovered happiness.

Bellever had been the first thing to awaken in me the consciousness of the evil state I was in. And how I had fought against it ! It had been my

first step up out of the hell I had made for myself. And now it was to be the highest rung I might ever climb towards heaven. Good reason indeed had I for giving Bellever large place in my estimation.

Bell-ever ! Bell-ever ! Yes, it still chimed in my ears like the sound of a sanctuary bell—and more now than ever, though now it rang the knell on the happiest days I could ever hope to see.

Where Cherrybrook wandered lingeringly under its bridge I called to the chauffeur to stop, and bade him wait.

“ We are going to Bellever,” I said, and we passed through the gate in the piled-granite wall, and tramped over the crackling black stalks left by the swaling fires, towards the great gray Tor.

I looked anxiously for sign of My Lady, but could see none. If my telegram had by any chance missed her my whole plan might miscarry. She might be away for the day. She might be ill and unable to come. Unhappy possibilities crowded in upon me. I absolutely sweated anxieties.

Then, to my mighty relief, just as we set foot to the final rise strewn with the disintegrated fragments of the giant stones on top, a white figure came through from the other side and stood looking questioningly round. She had no doubt come up from Bellever Bridge on the other side and had only that moment arrived.

My companion had been busy with his going, for

the ground was full of pitfalls. I grasped him suddenly by the hand,—for the first and last time. I do not know why. Possibly with some wild idea that at the very last moment at the sight of her he might turn and go.

He glanced round at me in surprise, then followed my look and saw her. He stopped one moment, with a deep breath, and stood looking up at her. Then he doffed his hat, gave me a final wring of the hand and pressed on and up, bareheaded, seeing nothing in all the world, I knew, but her.

And I stood where he had left me and watched afar off.

She was clad all in white. She looked like one of her own tall white Madonna lilies with the golden crowns that grow by the south porch at Heysham.

She stood watching, waiting. I saw her hands rise in a little gesture of joyful amazement. Then she stood with them outstretched in welcome, and he went up to grasp them.

I saw him take them eagerly in his and look up into her face. How well I could imagine what her face would be like at that supreme moment. There would be in it something of the Holy Mother,—something of the saintly lover,—something of her answered prayers,—and much—very much—of the eager maid who has got her heart's desire.

I saw him bend and kiss her hands and fall on his knees before her with bowed head.

Then I turned,—with a sob in my heart that was partly joy at her joy, partly sorrow for myself,—I turned and went down the hill alone.

And as I went the sob resolved itself into the pregnant words I had read more than once in My Lady's missal—"Consummatum est!—Consummatum est!—Consummatum est!"

Over and over again, as I stumbled mistily along over the crackling heather-stalks, I said them to myself. They reminded me of that Greater Agony which passed without the joy of visible fruition, and the soreness of my heart was comforted.

He upon the Cross had given Himself for a world that flouted Him then and paid but little heed to Him still.

My little giving was of very small account, but it was all I had to give—and, in my heart, I shall ever bear the joy of knowing that it has made for My Dear Lady's happiness.

I have finished this record of my retrieval from the depths by My Dear Lady of the Moor, in the little inn at Postbridge where so much of it was written.

As a presentation of Her it is, I know, very inadequate. I have done my best, however, and simply set it and her all down as they presented themselves to me.

To-morrow I intend to walk over to Graystone

by way of Challacombe Common, to say one last prayer for her happiness in her own little white chapel which has meant so much to me.

I shall watch till she and that other have gone up to Dream Tor, as I know they will do, and then I shall steal into the chapel and there I shall leave this manuscript, in the far corner of the externe's seat from which I have so often watched her at her prayers.

I leave it in her hands to do what she will with.

If she thinks well to give it to the world, I desire that it be entitled—"My Lady of the Moor," and that it be dedicated to—"Beatrice—My Lady of the Moor, who by her noble faith and many prayers saved alive the soul of one sinful man, and, if it please God, of two."

EPILOGUE

THAT, in its essentials, was the story left by Noel Daunt—or, to give him the name he latterly chose to go by, Ian Carril—in the little white House of Prayer on the edge of the Moor at Graystone, on the very night that happy accident introduced me to it and its Guardian Spirit.

After perusing and considering it she handed it to me for further judgment, and finally we decided to publish it, subject to the veto of him she called 'Lancelot,' whom it so intimately concerned.

Had she found it earlier—but probably it was not then there—she could have discussed it with him before he left for London. He had been gone only a few hours when I met her.

Before she could consult him about it, however, the storm of the war broke over us, and the matter had to be left in abeyance, as he was one of the first to go to the front, to hold, as I now know, a position of very high importance.

The result to myself of that over-long day on Hamildown, and the happy accident of the chapel, was the very pleasant acquaintance of 'My Lady of the Moor' in her own gracious person. The chance acquaintance ripened into friendship through

a fairly regular correspondence, but we did not meet again till the spring of 1915.

Meanwhile, My Lady's letters kept me informed as to the doings of those chiefly concerned.

She herself was, as always, mightily busy in good works—literary and otherwise,—the focus of a huge correspondence with all sorts and conditions of burdened men and women, and, I was sure, a source of light and healing to all.

She was, I could see by her letters, radiantly happy, in spite of the fact that 'Lancelot' was in the thick of the fighting and as likely as not to be killed any minute in the day.

"That is as it may please God," she wrote, soon after he left, "and I leave him safely in His wise and loving hands. I have placed his name behind the statue of S. Michael in my little House of Bread, and I pray for him continually. He is doing noble duty and is happier than he ever has been in his life before,—as also am I. He has risen above his past, though the remembrance of it weighs him to the ground at times. That is the only sad note in his treasured letters. To blot out all those bitter memories, he says he would willingly sacrifice the greater part of what may be left to him. And that indeed, may be little, for he may be dead even as I write. And if that should come, I shall not dare to sorrow over much. Enough for me that our hearts and souls have been knit together once more

in this life. For fullest fruition we can look safely to the future. God is good, and it is a good, glad world.

“But I *am* worried—as much as I permit any earthly matters to worry me—about our dear friend Ian Carril. I would dearly have liked to see him again. I wrote to him very fully, with my heart’s thanks for the noble thing he has done for us both. How great a thing none but ourselves can fully know. And I have had no answer,—which is very unlike him. I wonder, dear friend, if you could learn anything about him for me and ease my heart concerning him.”

She gave me the address of the hotel in Russell Street where Carril usually put up and I went along to enquire.

He had been there for one day after coming up from Dartmoor, but had left the following day. Yes, there were letters waiting for him. And among them I recognised My Lady’s handwriting. There was a rumour among the staff that Mr. Carril had gone to the front—as a war correspondent it was believed. And that was all I could learn.

It struck me that Johnstone—whom I knew—might be able to tell me something of him. So I went down to Fleet Street to dig him up.

I found him at last and we adjourned to his special haunt for coffee and smokes.

“Carril?—Do you know Carril?” he said, when I broached the subject.

“ I don’t know him personally, but I know all about him.”

“ Oh—you do, do you ? ” and he regarded me inquisitively.

“ Well, more than most folks, anyway. And I should say he’s a much finer fellow than most folks think.”

“ He is that. Well, what do you want to know about him,—and why ? ”

“ He did a very great service to a friend of mine—at grievous cost to himself, and now he seems to have disappeared. We want to know where he’s got to.”

“ I got him the offer of special to the ‘ Daily Telephone,’ and he left in a hurry. He’s somewhere at the front, but I can’t tell you where. But he’s pretty sure to be back soon. They’re shutting down on war correspondents, and quite right too, from their point of view. They tell too much sometimes. But, hang it all !—we’ve got to live, even in war time. I’m going Red Cross. Off in a week or two. I shall see something anyway, and it’ll all come in useful some time.”

And that, for the time being, was all the news I could get for My Lady.

It was about a month later that I met Johnstone again, clad in khaki, with the Red Cross on his arm, striding along the Embankment in a purposeful way, and greeted him :

“ Hello, Warrior ? ”

“ Picker-up,—at your service ! By the way, I met your man yesterday,—Carril.”

“ Oh, he’s back then, as you foretold.”

“ Yes,—no opening for war correspondents. He’s joined the London Scottish——”

“ Good ! My boy’s in it too.”

“ He’ll probably know Carril then, or can get track of him for you. He’s keen to get out and tear Prussians to rags. Says they’re possessed of the devil and ought to be destroyed. Heard some horrible things out there, and says he has every reason to believe they’re true. No, he didn’t see much himself. They wouldn’t let him. But he saw quite enough to make him believe what he heard. If you still want him send him a line to Head-quarters at Buckingham Gate—or run along and catch your boy and make him find him for you. They’re generally all on deck between five and six.”

I went along that same evening, and by dint of much enquiry at last found my own boy—to his very great astonishment—and presently, through him, my man. I recognised him at once as the lean-faced, sombre man I had briefly seen at Postbridge.

“ You don’t know me, Mr. Carril,” I said, “ except perhaps by name. But I’ve looked you up on behalf of your friend, the Lady of the little White Chapel at Graystone.”

“ Ah—you know My Lady ? ” he asked quickly, with a searching look at me.

“ I have that privilege. But only of late,—after you left Graystone.”

“ Suppose we go upstairs,” he suggested. “ It will be quieter there,” and we climbed the much-trodden stone staircase inside the wall, and came out on to a gallery which we had almost to ourselves.

“ The Lady of the Chapel begged me to find out what had become of you. She wrote to you, but received no answer.”

“ I was out of England. I have had her letter since I returned and have replied to it.”

“ Oh—I did not know.”

“ It was only yesterday that it struck me there might be something for me in Russell Street, and I went along to enquire.”

“ You are not living there now, then ? ”

“ No, I’ve taken a room closer at hand. You see, I’m here all day.”

“ And you’re hoping to get out ? ”

“ At the first possible moment. It’s going to be a red-hot business and every man will be wanted. They’re terribly ready. We’re not. . . . She is well ?—The Lady of the Chapel ?—and . . . happy ? ”

“ Quite well, and happier than ever in her life before—thanks to you ! ”

“ Ah ! ”—he looked quickly and keenly at me and then down again into the maelstrom of kilted figures down below.

I judged it well to tell him just how much I knew, and exactly how I happened to come into the matter.

He listened quietly but intently, with just a quiet nod now and again.

“If you won’t deem me impertinent, may I say that I think you acted very——”

But he raised a peremptory hand and stopped me.

“You know My Lady,” he said quietly. “Well then—you understand. . . . Her happiness is the only possible thing. . . . I hope to God it will make for it ! ”

“So far I can assure you it has done. I believe her to be completely and absolutely happy—except on your account.”

“I have written to her,” he said briefly.

“A common friendship with the Lady of the Chapel should be a bond between us. Can we not see something of one another, until the time comes for you to go ? ”

“Thank you ! We’ll see. We’re working very hard here, you know.—Trying to do in six months what usually takes two or three years. Twenty-mile route marches are the order of the day at present——”

“Sundays ? ”

“We’re some of us on duty all the time.”

So I left my card with him and a cordial invitation to come out whenever he felt inclined and had the time.

I had a letter from My Lady at Graystone next morning, telling me about him, and begging me to look him up and do anything in the way of friendship that was possible.

“I have placed his name and your boy’s with Lancelot’s behind the statue of S. Michael,”—she wrote—“and they are ever in my prayers. If it please God, they will all come through unscathed. If He sees otherwise, be sure, my friend, that it is for the best. I have implicit confidence in His Love and Wisdom, and my heart is perfectly at rest concerning them.”

Carril came out to see us several times during the autumn and winter, and I was glad to get somewhat more into his acquaintance.

He was at all times silent and reserved, but I, knowing so much of what he had gone through, quite understood; and in his quiet way I think he enjoyed his taste of our simple home-life.

Only when he was alone with me, and our talk came round to the Lady of the little White Chapel, did he kindle at all. But it did not take half an eye to see what extraordinary depth of feeling for her dwelt beneath that quiet exterior of his.

“She stands next to God with me and very little below Him,” he said tersely one night. “It is through her I have learned all I know of Him and His ways.”

THAT grim Autumn and Winter passed—for some of us like a dreadful nightmare, and we mentally pinched ourselves at times to make sure it was all real,—that in this twentieth century such things could really be,—that the so-called Christian nations were tearing at one another's throats,—and that one of them seemed to have deliberately sold itself to the devil.

On October 31st—the night of Hallowe'en—the First Battalion of the London Scottish suffered their ghastly baptism of fire and death at Messines, and bore themselves gallantly. They suffered dreadfully, however, and supplementary drafts were the order of the day to bring them up to strength again.

Carril and my own boy went out with the draft on Sunday, March 7th; and then—as to so many more—the grim reality of war came very close home to us.

“Have no fears for them!”—wrote My Lady, from Graystone. “All is well with them whatever happens, but I have a strong faith that they will all be given back to us safe and well. God and S. Michael will see to them.”

Surely no loftier or more hopeful spirit ever dwelt in woman.

The anxious months dragged on. We had reports of close shaves and narrow escapes from all of them, but in war a miss is as good as a mile, and so far they were untouched.

“As I told you!”—wrote My Lady. “God and S. Michael are looking after them for us. Don’t worry!”

Then on May 9th came the hot work at Richebourg. The London Scottish, we knew, were somewhere in that neighbourhood. They were brigaded with the 1st Scots Guards, 1st Coldstreams, 1st Black Watch, and 1st Camerons, and so formed the 1st Guards Brigade of the 1st Division of the 1st Army Corps of the 1st Army, and were mightily uplifted at the high honour done them,—and our fears for them were proportionately increased.

Richebourg was costly work. Details came in slowly. Our anxieties were great.

It was a week later that I got a telegram from My Lady at Graystone ;—“Meet me at Paddington 3.30. My two are wounded. Can you see me across to Boulogne?”

He would be a strangely made man who could refuse such a request. I made all my preparations, and was waiting on Paddington platform when the train ran in, and the guard, who seemed to have taken My Lady under his special protection, handed her out with an air.

She was wearing the golden-brown costume

trimmed with what looked like peacocks' feathers, which I remembered Carril mentioning in his MS., and it became her wonderfully well. I was not surprised at the guard's gusto in his guardianship. That, and her distinguished carriage, caused many to turn and stare after her as we went down the platform.

Her face was perfectly calm ; her manner, as usual, unruffled and dignified. She always, somehow, suggested life on a loftier plane than those about her. Perhaps it was the outward and visible sign of the inward grace of her little white chapel on the Moor.

"Both rather serious, I fear," she said quietly, in answer to my anxious questions. "But it will be all right. How soon can we get across? Yes, I have a passport. He insisted on getting it for me months ago. And you?"

"I got one months ago also, as soon as my boy went out. We can catch to-night's boat, and, as times of sailing are indefinite, it might be as well to get on at once to Folkestone. Have you lunched?"

"Thank you, yes. Let us go on at once."

We had no difficulties either at Charing Cross or Folkestone. Our slender baggage was passed in a moment. It seemed as though the officials understood that we were hastening to a possible death-bed.

"When did you get word?" I asked, as we sped among the roofs and chimney-pots of South London.

"At eight o'clock this morning. The telegram had been delayed somewhere."

"You made quick work."

"Such a matter admits of no delay. I arranged things at home, wired Wright to come for me in his car, and caught the 10.30 at Bovey quite easily."

"Any details given in the telegram?"

"No. It simply says, 'Both wounded. Can you come?'"

"And who sent it?"

". . . Lancelot."

"You bear it bravely."

"Why not? Whatever it is I know it is for the best. Now that my heart is at ease concerning him I can bear anything . . . everything. . . . It was only when his future life was in peril that my heart was on the rocks. After all, this life is a very little thing. It's only the next that matters."

"This world would be a mighty different place to live in if there were more like you in it," I could not forbear saying; for her lofty philosophical spirit, born, I doubted not, of her close intimacies with the Powers with whom she was in such constant and familiar communion, impressed me greatly.

"There are more in it than you suppose. I am nothing uncommon."

"It may be so, but it has not been my good

fortune to come across many who look upon life as you do."

"That is your misfortune," she smiled. "I hope you did not think it very outrageous,—my asking you to escort me across."

"On the contrary——"

"You see I am singularly—sadly—short of male relatives. I have not one I could ask. I knew I could trust you, and I hoped you would not mind."

"I mind very much, and I am honoured by your confidence. I can quite understand Carril's readiness to serve you to the utmost of his power with no hope of return."

"Poor Ian Carril!" she murmured. "From the ordinary point of view what an unsatisfying life he has had! But, to me, he stands high—among the very first indeed."

"I can understand that."

"How did you like him?"

"Very much. But of course we saw very little of him—and then only the outer man. He was always very reserved."

"No wonder,—after all he had gone through. He is a good man. He will have his reward."

At Folkestone we were fortunate and had little delay. The sea too was smooth and we made quick passage—escorted part of the way by British destroyers, and presently handed over by them to French, who saw us safely into Boulogne Harbour.

I took My Lady straight to the Hotel Meurice in the rue Victor Hugo, a house I had known for many years, and found we had fallen well. For there were living there a number of the British Medical Staff and their interest in My Lady was instantaneous.

For the first time I then heard the actual name of him she called Lancelot, and the way was open to her the moment she mentioned it.

She learned that he was in the hospital temporarily established in the Hotel Princesse in the rue Ste. Beuve.

His condition ? Serious, but by no means hopeless ; in fact, the latest report gave good grounds for prospect of recovery, though it might be a long business.

And Ian Carril ? Ah—that was the private in the London Scottish, whom ‘ Lancelot ’—I am pledged to stick to that name—had insisted, when insistence was almost beyond him and a risky indulgence, on receiving absolutely equal treatment with himself. They understood there was some very special reason for that,—that the London Scot man had in fact risked and indeed, it would probably turn out—given his life for the other.

At which My Lady’s usually calm face was a fine study in emotions.

They were in adjoining private rooms at the hotel. It was too late to see them that night. To-morrow it should be arranged at the earliest possible moment.

And My Lady thanked them in a way that made every man of them eager to win more of the same. Then she ordered some supper to be sent to her room, and bade us good night.

As early as all the circumstances permitted we went along next morning to the Hotel Princesse, well escorted by medicals, and were taken at once to the rooms where the wounded men lay.

My Lady went of course straight to Lancelot. I judged it seemly not to intrude, and so asked to be taken to Carril.

He was obviously in sore straits,—a mass of bandages with lean bloodless flesh just visible in between. He was also obviously in great pain and fully conscious, though it was only late the previous night that he had come to himself.

“And better perhaps for him if he hadn’t,” one of the medicos said to me afterwards. “He must be suffering tortures. His back is like a cullender—all holes—and all bullet-holes. I’ve not heard particulars yet, but there’s something unusual about it all. Some of the bullets have gone right through him. Some are still in him. We got out all we could while he was unconscious. Really, you know, he has no right to be alive. I don’t know what his walk in life has been, but he’s in marvellous condition—not a superfluous ounce on him and all the rest steel-wire.”

“Will he pull through ? ”

“Absolutely impossible, according to all known theories. But one never knows. In war-time men recover from wounds that would be fatal in peace. He may linger on—in very great pain which will wear him out in time. He might collapse at any moment.”

He gave me some account of the worst injuries, which made me glad I had had a good breakfast before coming. To attempt to describe them—which in any case I could not do—would simply be like pages out of a treatise on gunshot wounds. So there I leave it.

He knew me as I came to the bedside and smiled faintly.

“Dear fellow ! I’ve brought you something that will gladden your heart. My Lady is here and will be in in a minute or two.”

And the look of ineffable joy on the lean dark face made my eyes misty for a moment.

It was, I knew, the one thing on earth he would have desired.

He smiled faintly again, a pitiful smile forced by sheer strength of will through his rending agonies. So—when their hearts were strong and their faith and hope securely anchored up above—smiled the victims of the rack while one by one their sinews snapped under the strain.

A tiny spark gleamed in both his sombre eyes. He made no attempt to speak. With bullets

through and through his lungs the marvel was that he could still breathe, even as gently and slowly as he was doing.

Then the door opened quietly and the Ward Sister ushered in My Lady. Carril's eyes fixed on her and never for a second left her all the time she was there,—such a hungry, happy, satisfied look as I never saw in human eyes before. I have seen something akin to it in my dog's when I have been away from home for a time and receive at last his joyous welcome back.

She fell on her knees by the bed, and laid one soft hand on one of his bandaged ones, and the other very gently on his bandaged head. And her face!—it was lit with holy fires. I saw the reflection of them in the dim mirrors of Carril's eyes.

“ Oh, my dear ! ” she said softly. “ You overwhelm us. You have climbed to the highest indeed. God be thanked for you and for this greatest doing of all ! Oh, Ian, live if you can, that we may thank you all our lives ! ”

“ All's well ! ” he murmured faintly, with that brief smile strained out of his agonies.

“ All is well, dear friend,—brother ! God is very good to us all. He has permitted you this greatest crowning deed. It brings you very near to Him. Oh, I thank God for you ! How He is rejoicing in you ! It's a good glad world where such things are possible. I will come to you every day—as often

as they will let me. And he sends you again his heartfelt gratitude. Promise me you will do your best to get better."

He smiled at her again, and then murmured, "I promise."

She told me all that had happened, as we walked under the arching trees and battlements of the Haute Ville towards the Cathedral, where she was hastening to return thanks for these great mercies.

"It was at Richebourg St. Vaast. They had most dreadful times there and were very hard pressed. They could not get through and had to retire. Lancelot's brigade suffered terribly. It was falling back under pressure of overwhelming odds and he was doing his utmost to stem the back-flow when he got hit—in the head and in the leg, and fell. The London Scottish were just alongside, and Ian Carril saw him fall and ran out to help him. He tried to lift him, and Lancelot begged him to leave him. The Germans were making a target of them and it was no use them both being killed. And then Ian did his wonderful thing. He laid Lancelot down and interposed his own body between him and the snipers who were determined to get them both. That is why his back is riddled with bullets. Oh, it is terrible, they say. And he lay there sheltering him until Lancelot's men made another rush and recovered them both. Can you imagine anything

more magnificent?—Knowing, as we do, all there was between those two!—Oh, it passes words! It was Christ-like. That is the only word for it. And they say he cannot possibly live. Think of it!—All those black years, before and after his prison time, he lived only in the hope of killing Lancelot. Then, by God's grace and for love of me, he brought him back to me and saved his soul alive. And now—now he has given his actual life for him—and for me. Oh, it is sublime! I am going to thank God and Our Lady for their great goodness to him and to us.”

And I sat in a back seat in the great church dedicated to Our Lady, and watched her as I had done in her little House of Prayer on the Moor. And as I watched I mused upliftingly on the very strange circumstances that had brought these lives together,—such divers lives, such extraordinary links of Fate between them—of Providence rather, for it was no blind chance that had ordered things so.

My Lady—a saint. Lancelot—a sinner above most. Carril—driven to the ultimate crime by Lancelot's sin. Carril, anti-Papist by birth and training, redeemed by My Lady, most fervent of Papists. Lancelot, the sinner, brought back to grace and My Lady by Carril, whose sole aim in life had been his destruction, whose only brief gleam of hope in life had been the winning of My Lady. And now this crowning act of Carril's in the giving

of his own life for the life of the man he had sworn to kill.

Was there ever a more tangled skein ? But as I mused there came back to me the words of Preacher John in one of My Lady's books,—“ Love on ! Love on ! Love on ! ”—and I saw that the power which had at last straightened out that tangled skein—which had, without our understanding it, been working out the end from the beginning, was the Power that rules the world in spite of us—the Power of Love. The Love of woman for man, and man for woman, and, over all, the Love of God for both and all.

I HAD done all I could, and my home duties would not permit me to stay on indefinitely in Boulogne.

So, committing My Lady to the care of the Medical Staff in general and the Ward Sisters and the hostess of the Meurice in particular, I returned to London, quite satisfied in my mind that she would be excellently well looked after.

I looked each day to receive news of Carril's death. But the days passed and still in some marvellous fashion he lived.

My Lady wrote a line every second day or so, and each letter I opened I expected to receive the final word of him.

But that word did not come. Any actual recovery was of course out of the question, and they all knew it, and he knew it himself. He suffered agonies, and yet he did not die.

"And truly, for his dear sake, I am sorry that it is not ended," wrote My Lady. "And he would be glad too. But we can only wait God's good time, and wonder."

Lancelot meanwhile was making good progress, and in one of her letters she hinted at a strange and wonderful development in him which brought joy to her heart.

“He is happier,” she said, “than ever I have known him. He is like one whose burden has been loosed from him and his soul set free. I have not, of course, been able to discuss the matter with the M.O. as I can with you, who know all, and what the burden was that weighed so upon him. Dear friend, I do believe my prayers have been answered, and Christ’s own promise, made to me in my little chapel that night when I was so near to death, has been fulfilled. And fulfilled in this life, which is even better and more than He promised,—and just like Him ! He promised me that in heaven the memory of his sin should be wiped out, but that the sense of forgiveness should remain. And it seems to me that that is just what has happened, only that it has come now, for my great happiness, instead of later. No one else could notice or understand it, but I know him so well. All the sorrow and regret he had come to feel for that black hidden life of his could never wipe out the bitter memory of it. He knew it, and I knew it, for we spoke of it together. And oh, how I have prayed for him ! It was good for him to suffer and it was right. But I prayed that in time the bitterness of his suffering might end, and that he might feel only the forgiveness, and so find peace of mind and heart again. And undoubtedly it is so. His very face is changed, and oh, so much for the better. All the bitterness and sadness, which remained even after he came back to me, are gone completely. He is a new man. Only

the good is left in him. I believe that one of the bullets in his head has destroyed just that little bit of brain that housed those unhappy memories. Such things do happen. That much I have learned from the M.O.'s and nurses. It is either that, or in some way a knowledge of God's full forgiveness has come to him and effected practically the same thing.

"God is good, and it is a good, glad world!—even though our dear Ian Carril cannot long remain in it with us. But he will be glad to go. He is happy in our happiness and at all the large hand he has had in it. I sit with him by the hour. He suffers terribly and my hand soothes his pain when nothing else will. He has only one great desire left, and that I fear is impracticable. It is that he should be allowed to die on Dartmoor! Isn't that like him?—and yet it is natural, for Dartmoor has been all in all to him. I wish it could be managed, but I don't see how. He has given us everything—even to his life. Oh, if we could do for him this one thing that he craves. If he is still with us when Lancelot can be moved he says it shall be done. The cost and trouble would not count and his influence would."

And fourteen days later she wrote joyfully that it was to be done,—tried at all events. Lancelot had made arrangements for a special invalid carriage from Folkestone to Charing Cross, for an ambulance across to Paddington and for another invalid carriage to Bovey. Thence they would travel by

another ambulance, sent down on purpose, to Heysham.

“ Money, you see, is fortunately nothing to him. His only wish is to carry out, if it can be done, this last wish of our poor Ian Carril’s heart. Ian is quite aware that he may die on the journey. He says it is worth trying for. . . . Will you, dear friend, meet us at Charing Cross and give me what help you can ? ”

I did, and saw them off at Paddington. But my help was not needed, for the whole royal family could not have met with more whole-hearted attention from everyone concerned than did My Lady and her wounded ones.

I was very much struck with the appearance of Lancelot. I had never known him, but he seemed to me a very noble-looking man ; and it was difficult to associate the man I saw with the man I knew only from Carril’s story and My Lady’s confirmation of it.

Carril himself was terribly worn and very weak, and obviously in great pain. At the same time he was as full of eagerness to see the end of this great adventure as so broken a man could be.

“ Worth it all,” he whispered, when I endeavoured to express my feeling for him in his suffering. “ To die on Dartmoor ! That is all. . . . I do not care how soon . . . if only there. . . . They are very happy,” he said, looking at My Lady and Lancelot. “ Her happiness is everything. . . . Thank God, she is happy ! ”

“**A**LL is well !”—wrote My Lady, two days later. “All is well ! God is good, and it’s a good, glad world ! . . . Our dear Ian Carril died last night in the sunset, just as he had wished and where he wished. Nothing could have been more beautiful. It was heavenly sweet. The journey had tried him terribly and he knew he was going. As the very last thing of all, he begged to be carried a little way up the Moor in front of the house, so that his eyes might rest at the last upon the things he loved best.

So four of the neighbours,—dear men of Devon, who had known him and liked him,—carried him out, on the stretcher on which he had travelled from Boulogne, to a clear spot among the heather and bracken from which he could see the sun sinking behind Hamildown.

He was going quickly. I knelt by his side, and he whispered, “Believer.”

And when I told them what he wanted, those dear men carried him on, past the stream and the bog, right up to Dream Tor.

And there they laid him down and stood afar off, leaving us together.

I knelt again and held his poor wasted hand in mine, and we sat and waited for Brother Death to come and take him to his rest and his reward.

He was perfectly happy. I never saw a happier face, though he must have suffered horribly from the jolting, careful as the men had been.

And the sunset ! Never have I seen such heavenly glory. It might have been sent specially for him. The west was full of clouds, but the radiance of heaven itself seemed to stream through them, and round them, and all about them,—amber and crimson and great shafts of mellow gold, and, away behind them, infinite wide free space of rarest tender blue-green ether. Oh, it was wonderful—heavenly !

He lay looking at it, his face all lighted up by it.

Then his eyes travelled slowly along the shadowy slopes of Hamildown till they came to Bellever, which had meant so much in his life. And Bellever was noble,—like a great uncut amethyst flushed with gold. Princetown was shadowed by the slope of Hessary. I was glad we could not see it, though I do not think he would have minded. He had risen above it.

“ Bellever ! ” he whispered, and the tears ran down my face at thought of all that Bellever had been to him and to me,—new life to us both,—and of all the still more it will be to me henceforth till

I die too. How I would love to die just as our dear Ian Carril died !

His face was full of light—from the inside and the outside—that glorious golden light of the setting suns—his own and God's.

The hand I held in mine quickened suddenly for a moment. It clung to mine. His lips moved again and I bent close to him. He looked up into my eyes, and said with his very last breath, " My—Dear—Lady ! . . . I . . . thank . . . God "—then, as I kissed him for the first and last time, the life went out of his hand, but the glory of the sunset was still in his eyes.

Dear, dear Ian Carril ! He died thinking of me—as he had lived. I sat for a few minutes still, in the Presence. I could not turn at once to life again. And as I sat looking out over the Moor and all that he had loved so much, I was suddenly as conscious that he was still close to me as ever I was when he was alive,—conscious too that it was the new Ian, the risen, full of new strength and beauty. And I felt, not like one bereft, but as one endowed suddenly with unexpected treasure. If he had actually spoken to me I should not have been in the least surprised. In time he will. Of that I am certain. And always now I shall have the comforting sense of his actual nearer nearness. He will hover about me. He will help me. He will do all that he would have loved to do for me, as he never could have done here.

Oh, I am rich in him and all his undying love for me.

And as I sat and looked on the Moor, it gave me once again its great message which I have striven to make known to men. I saw that out of all evil, Love rises triumphant at last. I saw that while the Moor stands, clothed in her regal purple, as long as the Dart flows from her mighty bosom, so will Love stand, royal, invincible; so will Love flow unfailing throughout all ages, subduing all things to himself before the end. For Love is God, and God is Love.

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He is lying now before the altar and the Christ in my little white House of Prayer—with flowers and lights about him, and the ruby lamp that he loved above him, and I have said many prayers for his soul's sweet repose.

He is the first who has ever lain there. But when my time comes, and Dear Brother Death enters without knocking, I too hope to lie where he lies now. And I pray that my going may be as sweet and as happy as his."

So died Noel Daunt, better known as Ian Carril, —would-be murderer, convict, truest of true lovers, and very gallant Christian gentleman.

Lancelot made a good recovery, and My Lady's

letters confirmed her idea that one of the bullet wounds in the head had without a doubt wiped out from his memory all but the vaguest shadow of recollection of the burden of shame he had carried for so many years.

It naturally seemed to me that it would be unwise, in the circumstances, even to submit to him the story of Ian Carril, and still more so to publish it. Though, as, by the grace of God and My Lady, it had all worked out, I could not but be sorry that the world should be deprived of so strange and uplifting a record of the saving of two souls by the simple power of love,—the love of one noble woman leading them both to the highest love of all.

I suggested this view of the matter to My Lady, and for a time heard no more of it.

Then she wrote me,—“He has left to-day for the front. I thought long over all you said, and took it to chapel with me, and prayed much for guidance. And in the end I decided to show it to him and do as he might wish.

He read it very carefully,—spent days on it—and then he said,—“It is too fine a thing to keep to ourselves. It cannot have been sent to us only for our own use. . . . As to myself . . . (he passed his hand over his brow as though striving to recall that mercifully blotted-out past) . . . Thank God, it has all passed from me! . . . And next to Him, I thank you, my dearest one, and Ian Carril.”

I am glad he has decided so, for it is Ian's monument and never was more fitting memorial or better deserved.

So now you can go ahead with an easy mind.
God is good, and it's a good, glad world ! ”

THE END





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